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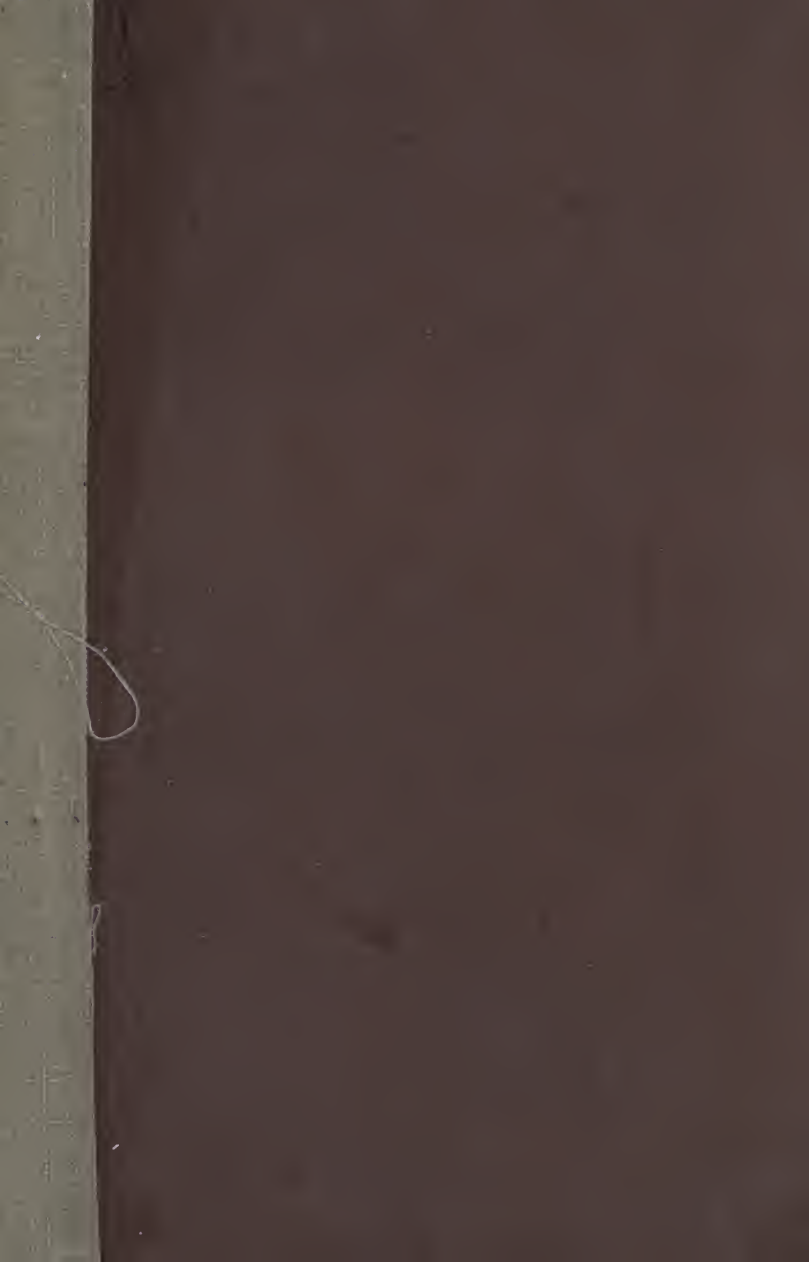
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AUTOBIOGRAPHY

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AUTOBIOGRAPHY.

LIFE

OF

VITTORIO ALFIERI.

WITH AN ESSAY

By WILLIAM D. HOWELLS.

BOSTON:
JAMES R. OSGOOD AND COMPANY,
Late Ticknor & Fields, and Fields, Osgood, & Co.

1877.

121 93581

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1877.

University Press: Welch, Bigelow, & Co.,
Cambridge.



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1877

VITTORIO ALFIERI.



VITTORIO ALFIERI, the Italian poet whom his countrymen would undoubtedly name next after Dante, Petrarch, Ariosto, and Tasso, and who, in spite of his limitations, was a man of signal and distinct dramatic genius, not surpassed if equalled since, is scarcely more than a name to most English readers. He was born in the year 1749, at Asti, a little city of that Piedmont where there has always been a greater regard for feudal traditions than in any other part of Italy; and he belonged by birth to a nobility which is still the proudest in Europe. "What a singular country is ours!" said the Chevalier Nigra, one of the first diplomats of our time, who for many years managed the delicate and difficult relations of Italy with France, but who was the son of an apothecary. "In Paris they admit me everywhere; I am asked to court and petted as few Frenchmen are; but here, in my own city of Turin, it would not be possible for me to be received by the Marchioness Doria." And if this was true in the afternoon of the nineteenth century, one easily fancies what society must have been at Turin in the forenoon of the eighteenth.

It was in the order of the things of that day and country that Alfieri should leave home while a child and go to school at the Academy of Turin. Here, as he tells in that most characteristic and amusing autobiography of his, he spent several years in acquiring a profound ignorance of whatever he was meant to learn; and he came away a stranger not only to the humanities, but to any one language, speaking a barbarous mixture of French and Piedmontese, and reading little or nothing. Doubtless he does not spare color in this statement, but almost anything you like could be true of the education of a gentleman as a gentleman got it from the Italian priests of the last century. "We translated," he says, "the Lives of Cornelius Nepos; but none of us, perhaps not even the masters, knew who these men were whose lives we translated, nor where was their country, nor in what times they lived, nor under what governments, nor what any government was." He learned Latin enough to turn Virgil's *Georgics* into his sort of Italian; but when he read Ariosto by stealth, he atoned for his transgression by failing to understand him. Yet Alfieri was one of the first scholars of that admirable academy, and he really had some impulses even then towards literature; for he liked reading Goldoni and Metastasio, though he had never heard of the name of Tasso. This was whilst he was still in the primary classes, under strict priestly control; when he passed to a more advanced grade, and found himself free to do what he liked in the manner that pleased him best, in common with the young Russians, Germans, and Englishmen then enjoying the advantages of the Academy of Turin, he says that being grounded in no study, directed by no one, and not understanding

any language well, he did not know what study to take up, nor how to study. "The reading of many French romances," he goes on, "the constant association with foreigners, and the want of all occasion to speak Italian, or to hear it spoken, drove from my head that small amount of wretched Tuscan which I had contrived to put there in those two or three years of burlesque study of the humanities and asinine rhetoric. In place of it," he says, "the French entered into my empty brain"; but he is careful to disclaim any literary merit for the French he knew, and he afterwards came to hate it, with everything else that was French, very bitterly.

It was before this, a little, that Alfieri contrived his first sonnet, which, when he read it to the uncle with whom he lived, made that old soldier laugh unmercifully, so that until his twenty-fifth year the poet made no further attempts in verse. When he left school he spent three years in travel, after the fashion of those grand-touring days when you had to be a gentleman of birth and fortune in order to travel, and when you journeyed by your own conveyance from capital to capital, with letters to your sovereign's ambassadors everywhere, and spent your money handsomely upon the pleasant dissipations of the countries through which you passed. Alfieri is constantly at the trouble to have us know that he was a very morose and ill-conditioned young animal, and the figure he makes as a traveller is no more amiable than edifying. He had a ruling passion for horses, and then several smaller passions quite as wasteful and idle. He was driven from place to place by a demon of unrest, and was mainly concerned, after reaching a city, in getting away from it as soon as he could. He gives anecdotes enough in

proof of this, and he forgets nothing that can enhance the surprise of his future literary greatness. At the Ambrosian Library in Milan they showed him a manuscript of Petrarch's, which, "like a true barbarian," as he says, he flung aside, declaring that he knew nothing about it, having a rancor against this Petrarch, whom he had once tried to read, and had altogether failed to understand. At Rome the Sardinian minister innocently affronted him by repeating some verses of Marcellus, which the sulky young noble could not comprehend. In Ferrara he did not remember that it was the city of that divine Ariosto whose poem was the first that came into his hands, and which he had now read in part with infinite pleasure. "But my poor intellect," he says, "was then sleeping a most sordid sleep, and every day, as far as regards letters, rusted more and more. It is true, however, that with respect to knowledge of the world and of men, I constantly learned not a little, without taking note of it, so many and diverse were the phases of life and manners that I daily beheld." At Florence he visited the galleries and churches, with much disgust and no feeling for the beautiful, especially in painting, his eyes being very dull to color. "If I liked anything better, it was sculpture a little, and architecture yet a little more"; and it is interesting to note how all his tragedies reflect these preferences, in their total lack of color and in their sculpturesque strength and sharpness of outline.

From Italy he passed as restlessly into France, yet with something of a more definite intention, for he meant to frequent the French theatre. He had seen a company of French players at Turin, and had acquainted himself with the most famous French trage-

dies and comedies, but with no thought of writing tragedies of his own. He felt no creative impulse, and he liked the comedies best; though, as he says, he was by nature more inclined to tears than to laughter. But he does not seem to have enjoyed the theatre much in Paris, a city for which he conceived at once the greatest dislike, he says, "on account of the squalor and barbarity of the buildings, the absurd and pitiful pomp of the few houses that affected to be palaces, the filthiness and gothicism of the churches, the vandalic structure of the theatres of that time, and the many and many and many disagreeable objects that all day fell under my notice, and worst of all the unspeakably misshapen and beplastered faces of those ugliest of women."

He had at this time already conceived that hatred of kings which breathes, or, I may better say, bellows, from his tragedies; and he was enraged even beyond his habitual fury by his reception at court, where it was etiquette for Louis XV. to stare at him from head to foot and give no sign of having received any impression whatever.

In Holland he fell in love, for the first time, and as was *de rigueur* in the polite society of that day, the object of his passion was another man's wife. In England he fell in love the second time, and as fashionably as before. The intrigue lasted for months; in the end it came to a duel with the lady's husband and a great scandal in the newspapers; but in spite of these displeasures, Alfieri liked everything in England. "The streets, the taverns, the horses, the women, the universal prosperity, the life and activity of that island, the cleanliness and convenience of the houses, though extremely little,"—as they still strike every

one coming from Italy,—these and other charms of “that fortunate and free country” made an impression upon him that never was effaced. He did not at that time, he says, “study profoundly the constitution, mother of so much prosperity,” but he “knew enough to observe and value its sublime effects.”

Before his memorable sojourn in England, he spent half a year at Turin reading Rousseau, among other philosophers, and Voltaire, whose prose delighted and whose verse wearied him. “But the book of books for me,” he says, “and the one which that winter caused me to pass hours of bliss and rapture, was Plutarch, his *Lives of the truly great*; and some of these, as Timoleon, Cæsar, Brutus, Pelopidas, Cato, and others, I read and read again, with such a transport of cries, tears, and fury, that if any one had heard me in the next room he would surely have thought me mad. In meditating certain grand traits of these supreme men, I often leaped to my feet, agitated and out of my senses, and tears of grief and rage escaped me to think that I was born in Piedmont, and in a time and under a government where no high thing could be done or said; and it was almost useless to think or feel it.”

These characters had a life-long fascination for Alfieri, and his admiration of such types deeply influenced his tragedies. So great was his scorn of kings at the time he writes of, that he despised even those who liked them, and poor little Metastasio, who lived by the bounty of Maria Theresa, fell under Alfieri’s bitterest contempt when in Vienna he saw his brother-poet before the empress in the imperial gardens at Schönbrunn, “performing the customary genuflexions with a servilely contented and adulatory face.” This loathing of royalty was naturally intensified beyond utter-

ance in Prussia. "On entering the states of Frederick, I felt redoubled and triplicated my hate for that infamous military trade, most infamous and sole base of arbitrary power." He told his minister that he would be presented only in civil dress, because there were uniforms enough at that court, and he declares that on beholding Frederick he felt "no emotion of wonder or of respect, but rather of indignation and rage. . . . The king addressed me the three or four customary words; I fixed my eyes respectfully upon his, and inwardly blessed Heaven that I had not been born his slave; and I issued from that universal Prussian barracks . . . abhorring it as it deserved."

In Paris Alfieri bought the principal Italian authors, which he afterwards carried everywhere with him on his travels; but he says that he made very little use of them, having neither the will nor the power to apply his mind to anything. In fact, he knew very little Italian, most of the authors in his collection were strange to him, and at the age of twenty-two he had read nothing whatever of Dante, Petrarch, Tasso, Boccaccio, or Machiavelli.

He made a journey into Spain, among other countries, where he admired the Andalusian horses, and bored himself as usual with what interests educated people; and he signalized his stay at Madrid by a murderous outburst of one of the worst tempers in the world. One night his servant Elia, in dressing his hair, had the misfortune to twitch one of his locks in such a way as to give him a slight pain; on which Alfieri leaped to his feet, seized a heavy candlestick, and without a word struck the valet such a blow upon his temple that the blood gushed out over his face, and over the person of a young Spaniard who had been

supping with Alfieri. Elia sprang upon his master, who drew his sword, but the Spaniard after great ado quieted them both; "and so ended this horrible encounter," says Alfieri, "for which I remained deeply afflicted and ashamed. . . . I told Elia that he would have done well to kill me; and he was the man to have done it, being a palm taller than myself, who am very tall, and of a strength and courage not inferior to his height. . . . Two hours later, his wound being dressed and everything put in order, I went to bed, leaving the door from my room into Elia's open as usual, without listening to the Spaniard, who warned me not thus to invite a provoked and outraged man to vengeance: I called to Elia, who had already gone to bed, that he could, if he liked and thought proper, kill me that night, for I deserved it. But he was no less heroic than I, and would take no other revenge than to keep two handkerchiefs, which had been drenched in his blood, and which from time to time he showed me in the course of many years. This reciprocal mixture of fierceness and generosity on both our parts will not be easily understood by those who have had no experience of the customs and of the temper of us Piedmontese"; though here, perhaps, Alfieri does his country too much honor in making his ferocity a national trait.

When at last he went back to Turin, he fell once more into his old life of mere vacancy, varied before long by an unworthy amour, of which he tells us that he finally cured himself by causing his servant to tie him in his chair, and so keep him a prisoner in his own house. A violent distemper followed this treatment, which the light-moraled gossip of the town said Alfieri had invented exclusively for his own use; many

days he lay in bed tormented by this anguish; but when he rose he was no longer a slave to his passion. Shortly after, he wrote a tragedy, or a tragic dialogue rather, in Italian blank verse, called *Cleopatra*, which was played in a Turinese theatre with a success of which he tells us he was at once and always ashamed.

Yet apparently it encouraged him to persevere in literature, his qualifications for tragical authorship being "a resolute spirit, very obstinate and untamed, a heart running over with passions of every kind, among which predominated a bizarre mixture of love and all its furies, and a profound and most ferocious rage and abhorrence against all tyranny whatsoever; . . . a very dim and uncertain remembrance of various French tragedies seen in the theatres many years before; . . . an almost total ignorance of all the rules of tragic art, and an unskilfulness almost total in the divine and most necessary art of writing and managing his own language." With this stock in trade, he set about turning his *Filippo* and his *Polinice*, which he wrote first in French prose, into Italian verse; making at the same time a careful study of the Italian poets. It was at this period that the poet *Ossian* was introduced to mankind by the ingenious and self-sacrificing Mr. McPherson, and Cesarotti's translation of him came into Alfieri's hands. These blank verses were the first that really pleased him; with a little modification he thought they would be an excellent model for the verse of dialogue.

He had now refused himself the pleasure of reading French, and he had nowhere to turn for tragic literature but to the classics, which he read in literal versions while he renewed his faded Latin with the help of a teacher. But he believed that his originality as a

tragic author suffered from his reading, and he determined to read no more tragedies till he had made his own. For this reason he already had given up Shakespeare. "The more that author accorded with my humor (though I very well perceived all his defects), the more I was resolved to abstain," he tells us.

This was during a literary sojourn in Tuscany, whither he had gone to accustom himself "to speak, hear, think, and dream in Tuscan, and not otherwise, evermore." Here he versified his first two tragedies, and sketched others, and here, he says, "I deluged my brain with the verses of Petrarch, of Dante, of Tasso, and of Ariosto, convinced that the day would infallibly come, in which all these forms, phrases, and words of others would return from its cells, blended and identified with my own ideas and emotions."

He had now indeed entered with all the fury of his nature into the business of making tragedies, which he did very much as if he had been making love. He abandoned everything else for it, — country, home, money, friends; for having decided to live henceforth only in Tuscany, and hating to ask and ask that royal permission to remain abroad without which, annually renewed, the Piedmontese noble of that day could not reside out of his own country, he gave up his estates at Asti to his sister, keeping for himself a pension that came to only about half his former income. The King of Piedmont was very well, as kings went in that day; and he did nothing to hinder the poet's expatriation. The long period of study and production which followed, Alfieri spent chiefly at Florence, but partly also at Rome and Naples.

It was during this time that he wrote and printed the greater number of his tragedies; and it was at this time also that he formed that relation with the

Countess of Albany which continued as long as he lived. The countess's husband was the Pretender Charles Edward, the last of the English Stuarts, who, like all his house, abetted his own evil destiny, and was then drinking himself to death; there were difficulties in the way of her union with Alfieri which would not perhaps have beset a less exalted lady. When her husband was dead, she and Alfieri were privately married. Their house became a centre of fashionable and intellectual society in Florence, and to be received in it was the best that could happen to any one. The relation seems to have been a sufficiently happy one, if not always the perfect devotion the poet describes; and after Alfieri's death the countess gave to the painter Fabre "a heart which," says Massimo d'Azeglio in his *Memoirs*, "according to the usage of the time, and especially of high society, felt the invincible necessity of keeping itself in continual exercise."

In 1787 the poet went to France to oversee the printing of a complete edition of his works, and five years later he found himself in Paris when the Revolution was at its height. The countess was with him, and after great trouble he got passports for both, and hurried to the city barrier. The National Guards stationed there would have let them pass, but a party of drunken patriots coming up had their worst fears aroused by the sight of two carriages with sober and decent people in them, and heavily laden with baggage. While they parleyed whether they had better stone the equipages, or set fire to them, Alfieri leaped out, and a scene ensued which placed him in a very characteristic light, and which enables us to see him as it were in person. When the patriots had read the passports, he seized them, and, as he says, "full of disgust and rage, and

not knowing at the moment, or in my passion despising the immense peril that attended us, I thrice shook my passport in my hand, and shouted at the top of my voice, 'Look! Listen! Alfieri is my name; Italian and not French; tall, lean, pale, red hair; I am he; look at me: I have my passport, and I have had it legitimately from those who could give it; we wish to pass, and, by Heaven, we *will* pass!'"

They passed, and two days later the authorities that had approved their passports confiscated the horses, furniture, and books that Alfieri had left behind him in Paris, and declared him and the countess — both foreigners — to be refugee aristocrats!

He established himself again in Florence, where, in his forty-sixth year, he took up the study of Greek, and made himself master of that literature, though, till then, he had scarcely known the Greek alphabet. The chief fruit of this study was a tragedy in the manner of Euripides, which he wrote in secret, and which he read to a company so polite that they thought it really was Euripides during the whole of the first two acts.

Alfieri's remaining years were spent in study and the revision of his works, to the number of which he added six comedies in 1800. The presence and domination of the detested French in Florence imbittered his life somewhat; but if they had not been there he could never have had the pleasure of refusing to see the French commandant, who had a taste for literary people if not for literature, and would fain have paid his respects to the poet. He must also have found consolation in the thought that if the French had become masters of Europe, many kings had been dethroned, and every tyrant who wore a crown was in a very pitiable state of terror or disaster.

Nothing in Alfieri's life was more like him than his death, of which the Abbate di Caluso gives a full account in his conclusion of the poet's biography. His malady was gout, and amidst its tortures he still labored at his comedies. He was impatient at being kept in-doors, and when they added plasters on the feet to the irksomeness of his confinement, he tore away the bandages that prevented him from walking about his room. He would not go to bed, and they gave him opiates to ease his anguish; under their influence his mind was molested by many memories of things long past. "The studies and labors of thirty years," says the abbate, "recurred to him, and what was yet more wonderful, he repeated in order from memory a good number of Greek verses from the beginning of Hesiod, which he had read but once. These he said over to the Signora Contessa, who sat by his side, but it does not appear, for all this, that there ever came to him the thought that death, which he had been for a long time used to imagine near, was then imminent. It is certain at least that he made no sign to the contessa, though she did not leave him till morning. About six o'clock he took oil and magnesia without the physician's advice, and near eight he was observed to be in great danger, and the Signora Contessa, being called, found him in agonies that took away his breath. Nevertheless he rose from his chair, and, going to the bed, leaned upon it, and presently the day was darkened to him, his eyes closed, and he expired. The duties and consolations of religion were not forgotten, but the evil was not thought so near, nor haste necessary, and so the confessor who was called did not come in time." D'Azeglio relates that the confessor arrived at the supreme moment, and saw

the poet bow his head : " He thought it was a salutation, but it was the death of Vittorio Alfieri."

I once fancied that a very close parallel between Alfieri and Byron might be drawn, but their disparities are greater than their resemblances, on the whole. Alfieri seems the vastly sincerer man of the two, and though their lives were alike in some lamentable particulars, Alfieri's life strikes me as unmoral, and Byron's as immoral. There is an antique simplicity in Alfieri ; Byron is the essence of conscious romanticism, and modern in the worst sense. But both were born noble, both lived in voluntary exile, both imagined themselves friends and admirers of liberty, both had violent natures, and both indulged the curious hypocrisy of desiring to seem worse than they were, and of trying to make out a shocking case for themselves when they could. They were men who hardly outlived their boyishness. Alfieri, indeed, had to struggle against so many defects of training that he could not have reached maturity in the longest life. He seems to have had no principles, good or bad, but only passions ; he hated with equal noisiness the tyrants of Europe and the Frenchmen who dethroned them.

When he left the life of a dissolute young noble for that of tragic authorship, he seized upon such histories and fables as would give the freest course to a harsh, narrow, gloomy, vindictive, and declamatory nature ; and his dramas reproduce the terrible fatalistic traditions of the Greeks, the stories of *Œdipus*, *Myrrha*, *Alcestis*, *Clytemnestra*, *Orestes*, and such passages of Roman history as those relating to the *Brutuses* and to *Virginia*. In modern history he has taken such characters and events as those of *Philip II.*, *Mary Stuart*,

Don Garcia, and the Conspiracy of the Pazzi. Two of his tragedies are from the Bible, the Abel and the Saul; one, the Rosmunda, from Longobardic history. And these themes, varying so vastly as to the times, races, and religions with which they originated, are all treated in the same spirit, — the spirit Alfieri believed Greek. Their interest comes from the situations and events; of character, as we have it in the romantic drama, and supremely in Shakespeare, there is scarcely anything; and the language is shorn of all metaphor and picturesque expression. Of course their form is wholly unlike that of the romantic drama; Alfieri holds fast by the famous unities as the chief and saving grace of tragedy. All his actions take place within twenty-four hours; there is no change of scene, and so far as he can master that most obstinate unity, the unity of action, each piece is furnished with a tangible beginning, middle, and ending. The wide stretches of time which the old Spanish and English and all modern dramas cover, and their frequent transitions from place to place, were impossible and abhorrent to him.

Schlegel, in his lectures on dramatic literature, blames Alfieri as one whose style was wanting in imagery and whose characters in fancy; who made his Italian stiff and brittle in trying to make it strong, and whose verse is harsh and unmusical. According to the German he paints naked and general ideas in unrelieved black and white; his villains are too openly villanous, his virtuous persons unlovely; he forgets, in casting aside grace and ornament for the sake of the moral effect, that a poet cannot teach except by pleasing; his tragedies are not Greek at all, and not comparable with the best French tragedies; he depicts tyrants with the colors of the school rhetoricians; he fails with modern subjects

because his ideal of the tragic forbids a local and determinate presentation; the Greek subjects lose their heroic magnificence in his hands, and take a modern, almost vulgar air. He manages best the public life of the Romans, and it is a great merit of his *Virginia* that the scene is in the forum, and partly before the eyes of the people. At other times, in his anxiety to observe the unity of scene, he places his action in some out-of-the-way corner, whither come only persons in difficulties. He strips his kings and heroes of external pomp, and the world around them seems depopulated.

In many respects I think this all just enough; but I find Alfieri's Greek tragedies far from vulgar. They have a grandeur quite independent of the graces which Schlegel supposes necessary to poetry, and they are not wanting in very delicate touches of pathos. On the other hand, I do not care for his Roman tragedies, or *Tragedies of Liberty*, as he calls them, which weary you with their windy tirades against tyrants.

It is equally hard to agree in all things with Emiliani-Giudici, the Italian critic, who most disagrees with Schlegel, and who, writing about the middle of our century, declares that when the fiery love of freedom shall have purged Italy, the Alfierian drama will be the only representation worthy of a great and free people. This critic holds that Alfieri's tragical ideal was of such a simplicity that it would seem derived regularly from the Greek, but for the fact that when he felt irresistibly moved to write tragedy, he probably did not know even the names of the Greek dramatists, and could not have known the structure of their dramas by indirect means, having read then only some Metastasian plays of the French school; so that he created that ideal of his by pure, instinctive force of genius. With him, as with

the Greeks, art arose spontaneously; he felt the form of Greek art by inspiration. He believed from the very first that the dramatic poet should assume to render the spectators unconscious of theatrical artifice, and make them take part with the actors; and he banished from the scene everything that could diminish their illusion; he would not mar the intensity of the effect by changing the action from place to place, or by compressing within the brief time of the representation the events of months and years. To achieve the unity of action, he dispensed with all those parts which did not seem to him the most principal, and he studied how to show the subject of the drama in the clearest light. In all this he went to the extreme, but he so wrought "that the print of his cothurnus stamped upon the field of art should remain forever singular and inimitable. Reading his tragedies in order, from the Cleopatra to the Saul, you see how he never changed his tragic ideal, but discerned it more and more distinctly until he fully realized it. Æschylus and Alfieri are two links that unite the chain in a circle. In Alfieri art once more achieved the faultless purity of its proper character; Greek tragedy reached the same height in the Italian's Saul that it touched in the Greek's Prometheus, two dramas which are perhaps the most gigantic creations of any literature." Emiliani-Giudici thinks that the literary ineducation of Alfieri was the principal exterior cause of this prodigious development, that a more regular course of study would have restrained his creative genius, and, while smoothing the way before it, would have subjected it to methods and robbed it of originality of feeling and conception. "Tragedy, born sublime, terrible, vigorous, heroic, the life of liberty, . . . was, as it were, redeemed by Vittorio Alfieri, reassumed the masculine, athletic forms of its original

existence, and recommenced the exercise of its lost ministry."

I do not begin to think this is all true. Alfieri himself owns his acquaintance with the French theatre before the time when he began to write, and we must believe that he got at least some of his ideas of Athens from Paris, though he liked the Frenchmen none the better for his obligation to them. A less mechanical conception of the Greek idea than his would have prevented its application to historical subjects. In Alfieri's *Brutus the First*, a far greater stretch of imagination is required from the spectator in order to preserve the unities of time and place than the most capricious changes of scene would have asked. The scene is always in the forum in Rome; the action occurs within twenty-four hours. During this limited time, we see the body of Lucretia borne along in the distance; Brutus harangues the people with the bloody dagger in his hand. The emissaries of Tarquin arrive and organize a conspiracy against the new republic; the sons of Brutus are found in the plot, and are convicted and put to death.

But such incongruities as these do not affect us in the tragedies based on the heroic fables; here the poet takes without offence any liberty he likes with time and place; the whole affair is in his hands, to do what he will so long as he respects the internal harmony of his own work. For this reason I think we find Alfieri at his best in these tragedies, among which I have liked the *Orestes* best, as giving the widest range of feeling with the greatest vigor of action. The *Agamemnon*, which precedes it, and which ought to be read first, closes with its most powerful scene. Agamemnon has returned from Troy to Argos with his captive

Cassandra, and Ægisthus has persuaded Clytemnestra that her husband intends to raise Cassandra to the throne. She kills him and reigns with Ægisthus, Electra concealing Orestes on the night of the murder, and sending him secretly away with Strophius, King of Phocis.

In the last scene, as Clytemnestra steals through the darkness to her husband's chamber, she soliloquizes, with the dagger in her hand: —

It is the hour ; and sunk in slumber now
Lies Agamemnon. Shall he nevermore
Open his eyes to the fair light ? My hand,
Once pledge to him of stainless love and faith,
Is it to be the minister of his death ?
Did I swear that ? Ay, that ; and I must keep
My oath. Quick, let me go ! My foot, heart, hand —
All over I tremble. O, what did I promise ?
Wretch ! what do I attempt ? How all my courage
Hath vanished from me since Ægisthus vanished !
I only see the immense atrocity
Of this my horrible deed ; I only see
The bloody spectre of Atrides ! Ah,
In vain do I accuse thee. No, thou lovest
Cassandra not. Me, only me, thou lovest,
Unworthy of thy love. Thou hast no blame,
Save that thou art my husband, in the world !
O Heaven ! Atrides, thou sent from the arms
Of trustful sleep, to death's arms by my hand ?
And where then shall I hide me ? O perfidy !
Can I e'er hope for peace ? O woful life, —
Life of remorse, of madness, and of tears !
How shall Ægisthus, even Ægisthus, dare
To rest beside the parricidal wife
Upon her murder-stainéd marriage-bed,
Nor tremble for himself ? Away, away, —

Hence, horrible instrument of all my guilt
 And harm, thou execrable dagger, hence!
 I'll lose at once my lover and my life,
 But not by this hand slain shall fall
 So great a hero! Live, honor of Greece
 And Asia's terror! Live to glory, live
 To thy dear children, and a better wife!
 — But what are these hushed steps? Into these rooms
 Who is it comes by night? Ægisthus? — Lost, I am lost!

ÆGISTHUS. Hast thou not done the deed?

CLY.

Ægisthus —

Æg. What, stand'st thou here, wasting thyself in tears?
 Woman, untimely are thy tears; 't is late,
 'T is vain, and it may cost us dear!

CLY.

Thou here!

But how — woe's me, what did I promise thee?
 What wicked counsel —

ÆG.

Was it not thy counsel?

Love gave it thee and fear annuls it — well!
 Since thou repentest, I am glad; and glad
 To know thee guiltless shall I be in death.
 I told thee that the enterprise was hard,
 But thou, unduly trusting in the heart,
 That hath not a man's courage in it, chose
 Thyself thy feeble hands to strike the blow.
 Now may Heaven grant that the intent of evil
 Turn not to harm thee! Hither I by stealth
 And favor of the darkness have returned,
 Unseen, I hope. For I perforce must come
 Myself to tell thee that irrevocably
 My life is dedicated to the vengeance
 Of Agamemnon.

He appeals to her pity for him, and her fear for herself; he reminds her of Agamemnon's consent to the sacrifice of Iphigenia, and goads her on to the crime

from which she had recoiled. She goes into Agamemnon's chamber, whence his dying outcries are heard:—

O treachery!

Thou, wife? O heavens, I die! O treachery!

Clytemnestra comes out with the dagger in her hand:—

The dagger drips with blood; my hands, my robe,
My face, — they all are wet with blood. What vengeance
Shall yet be taken for this blood! Already
I see this very steel turned on my breast,
And by whose hand!

The son whom she forebodes as the avenger of Agamemnon's death passes his childhood and early youth at the court of Strophius in Phocis. The tragedy named for him opens with Electra's soliloquy as she goes to weep at the tomb of their father:—

Night, gloomy, horrible, atrocious night,
Forever present to my thought, each year
For now two lustres I have seen thee come,
Clothed on with darkness and with dreams of blood,
And blood that should have expiated thine
Is not yet spilt! O memory, O sight!
O Agamemnon, hapless father, here
Upon these stones I saw thee murdered lie,
Murdered, and by what hand!

I swear to thee,

If I in Argos, in thy palace live,
Slave of Ægisthus, with my wicked mother
Nothing makes me endure a life like this
Saving the hope of vengeance. Far away
Orestes is; but living! I saved thee, brother;
I keep myself for thee, till the day rise
When thou shalt make to stream upon yon tomb
Not helpless tears like these, but our foe's blood.

While Electra fiercely muses, Clytemnestra enters with the appeal : —

CLY. Daughter !

EL. What voice ! O Heaven, thou here ?

CLY. My daughter,

Ah, do not fly me ! Thy pious task I fain
Would share with thee. Ægisthus in vain forbids,
He shall not know. Ah, come, go we together
Unto the tomb.

EL. Whose tomb ?

CLY. Thy — hapless — father's.

EL. Wherefore not say thy husband's tomb ? 'T is well :
Thou darest not speak it. But how dost thou dare
Turn thitherward thy steps, — thou that dost reek
Yet with his blood ?

CLY. Two lustres now are passed
Since that dread day, and two whole lustres now
I weep my crime.

EL. And what time were enough
For that ? Ah, if thy tears should be eternal,
They yet were nothing. Look ! Seest thou not still
The blood upon these horrid walls, — the blood
That thou didst splash them with ? And at thy presence
Lo, how it reddens and grows quick again !
Fly thou, whom I must nevermore call mother !

CLY. O, woe is me ! What can I answer ? Pity —
But I merit none ! — And yet if in my heart,
Daughter, thou couldst but read — ah, who could look
Into the secret of a heart like mine,
Contaminated with such infamy,
And not abhor me ? I blame not thy wrath,
No, nor thy hate. On earth I feel already
The guilty pangs of hell. Scarce had the blow
Escaped my hand before a swift remorse,
Swift but too late, fell terrible upon me.

From that hour still the sanguinary ghost
 By day and night, and ever horrible,
 Hath moved before mine eyes. Where'er I turn
 I see its bleeding footsteps trace the path
 That I must follow; at table, on the throne,
 It sits beside me; on my bitter pillow
 If e'er it chance I close mine eyes in sleep,
 The spectre — fatal vision! — instantly
 Shows itself in my dreams, and tears the breast,
 Already mangled, with a furious hand,
 And thence draws both its palms full of dark blood,
 To dash it in my face! On dreadful nights
 Follow more dreadful days. In a long death
 I live my life. Daughter, — whate'er I am,
 Thou art my daughter still, — dost thou not weep
 At tears like mine?

Clytemnestra confesses that Ægisthus no longer loves her, but she loves him, and she shrinks from Electra's fierce counsel that she shall kill him. He enters to find her in tears, and a violent scene between him and Electra follows, in which Clytemnestra interposes.

CLY. O daughter, he is my husband. Think, Ægisthus,
 She is my daughter.

ÆG. She is Atrides' daughter!

EL. He is Atrides' murderer!

CLY. Electra!

Have pity, Ægisthus! Look — the tomb! O, look,
 The horrible tomb! — and art thou not content?

ÆG. Woman, be less unlike thyself. Atrides, —
 Tell me by whose hand in yon tomb he lies?

CLY. O mortal blame! What else is lacking now
 To my unhappy, miserable life?

Who drove me to it now upbraids my crime!

EL. O marvellous joy! O only joy that's blessed
 My heart in these ten years! I see you both

At last the prey of anger and remorse ;
 I hear at last what must the endearments be
 Of love so blood-stained.

The first act closes with a scene between Ægisthus and Clytemnestra, in which he urges her to consent that he shall send to have Orestes murdered, and reminds her of her former crimes when she revolts from this. The scene is very well managed, with that frugality of phrase which in Alfieri is quite as apt to be touchingly simple as bare and poor. In the opening scene of the second act, Orestes has returned in disguise to Argos with Pylades, the son of Strophius, to whom he speaks : —

We are come at last. Here Agamemnon fell,
 Murdered, and here Ægisthus reigns. Here rose
 In memory still, though I a child departed,
 These natal walls, and the just Heaven in time
 Leads me back hither.

Twice five years have passed
 This very day since that dread night of blood,
 When, slain by treachery, my father made
 The whole wide palace with his dolorous cries
 Echo again. O, well do I remember !
 Electra swiftly bore me through this hall
 Thither where Strophius in his pitying arms
 Received me, — Strophius, less by far thy father
 Than mine, thereafter, — and fled onward with me
 By yonder postern-gate, all tremulous ;
 And after me there ran upon the air
 Long a wild clamor and a lamentation
 That made me weep and shudder and lament,
 I knew not why, and weeping Strophius ran,
 Forbidding with his hand my outcries shrill,
 Claspng me close, and sprinkling all my face

With bitter tears ; and to the lonely coast,
 Where only now we lauded, with his charge
 He came apace ; and eagerly unfurled
 His sails before the wind.

Pylades strives to restrain the passion for revenge in Orestes, which scarcely brooks the control of prudence, and imperils them both. The friend proposes that they shall feign themselves messengers sent by Strophius with tidings of Orestes' death, and Orestes has reluctantly consented, when Electra reappears, and they recognize each other. Pylades discloses their plan, and when her brother urges, "The means is vile," she answers, all woman, —

Less vile than is Ægisthus. There is none
 Better or surer, none, believe me. When
 You are led to him, let it be mine to think
 Of all — the place, the manner, time, and arms,
 To kill him. Still I keep, Orestes, still
 I keep the steel that in her husband's breast
 She plunged whom nevermore we might call mother.

ORESTES. How fares it with that impious woman ?

EL.

Ah,

Thou canst not know how she drags out her life !
 Save only Agamemnon's children, all
 Must pity her — and even we must pity.
 Full ever of suspicion and of terror,
 And held in scorn even by Ægisthus' self,
 Loving Ægisthus though she know his guilt ;
 Repentant, and yet ready to renew
 Her crime, perchance, if the unworthy love
 Which is her shame and her abhorrence, would ;
 Now wife, now mother, never wife nor mother,
 Bitter remorse gnaws at her heart by day
 Unceasingly, and horrible shapes by night
 Scare slumber from her eyes. — So fares it with her.

In the third scene of the following act Clytemnestra meets Orestes and Pylades, who announce themselves as messengers from Phocis to the king; she bids them deliver their tidings to her, and they finally do so, Pylades struggling to prevent Orestes from revealing himself. There are touchingly simple and natural passages in the lament that Clytemnestra breaks into over her son's death, and there is fire, with its true natural extinction in tears, when she upbraids Ægisthus, who now enters: —

My fair fame and my husband and my peace,
My only son beloved, I gave thee all.

All that I gave thou didst account as nothing
While aught remained to take. Who ever saw
At once so cruel and so false a heart?
The guilty love that thou didst feign so ill
And I believed so well, what hindrance to it,
What hindrance, tell me, was the child Orestes?
Yet scarce had Agamemnon died before
Thou didst cry out for his son's blood; and searched
Through all the palace in thy fury. Then
The blade thou durst not wield against the father,
Then thou didst brandish. Ay, bold wast thou then
Against a helpless child!
Unhappy son, what boot it to save thee
From thy sire's murderer, since thou hast found
Death ere thy time in strange lands far away.
Ægisthus, villanous usurper! Thou,
Thou hast slain my son! Ægisthus — O, forgive!
I was a mother, and am so no more.

Throughout this scene, and in the soliloquy preceding it, Alfieri paints very forcibly the struggle in Clytemnestra between her love for her son and her

love for Ægisthus, to whom she clings even while he exults in the tidings that wring her heart. It is all too boldly presented, doubtless, but it is very effective and affecting.

Orestes and Pylades are now brought before Ægisthus, and he demands how and where Orestes died, for after his first rejoicing he has come to doubt the fact. Pylades responds in one of those speeches with which Alfieri seems to carve the scene in bas-relief:—

Every fifth year an ancient use renews
 In Crete the games and offerings to Jove.
 The love of glory and innate ambition
 Lure the youth to that coast; and by his side
 Goes Pylades, inseparable from him.
 In the light car upon the arena wide,
 The hopes of triumph urge him to contest
 The proud palm of the flying-footed steeds,
 And too intent on winning, there his life
 He gives for victory.

ÆG. But how? Say on.

PYL. Too fierce, impatient, and incautious, he
 Now frights his horses on with threatening cries,
 Now whirls his blood-stained whip, and lashes them,
 Till past the goal the ill-tamed coursers fly
 Faster and faster. Reckless of the rein,
 Deaf to the voice that fain would soothe them now,
 Their nostrils breathing fire, their loose manes tossed
 Upon the wind, and in thick clouds involved
 Of choking dust, round the vast circle's bound,
 As lightning swift they whirl and whirl again.
 Fright, horror, mad confusion, death, the car
 Spreads in its crooked circles everywhere,
 Until at last, the smoking axle dashed
 With hideous shock against a marble pillar,
 Orestes headlong falls —

Leave me to die ; I care not, if I see
 My father avenged. I ask no other proof
 Of thy maternal love from thee. Quick, now,
 Strike ! O, what is it that I see ? Thou tremblest ?
 Thou growest pale ? Thou weapest ? From thy hand
 The dagger falls ? Thou lov'st Ægisthus, lov'st him
 And art Orestes' mother ? Madness ! Go,
 And never let me look on thee again !

Ægisthus dooms Electra to the same death with Orestes and Pylades, but on the way to prison the guards liberate them all, and the Argives rise against the usurper with the beginning of the fifth act, which I shall give entire, because I think it very characteristic of Alfieri, and necessary to a conception of his vehement, if somewhat arid genius. I translate as heretofore almost line for line, and word for word, keeping the Italian order as nearly as I can.

SCENE I.

ÆGISTHUS and Soldiers.

ÆG. O treachery unforeseen ! O madness ! Freed,
 Orestes freed ? Now we shall see —

Enter CLYTEMNESTRA.

CLY. Ah ! turn
 Backward thy steps.

ÆG. Ah, wretch, dost thou arm too
 Against me ?

CLY. I would save thee. Harken to me,
 I am no longer —

ÆG. Traitress —

CLY. Stay !

ÆG. Thou 'st promised
 Haply to give me to that wretch alive ?

CLY. To keep thee, save thee from him, I have sworn,

Though I should perish for thee! Ah, remain
 And hide thou here in safety. I will be
 Thy stay against his fury —

ÆG. Against his fury

My sword shall be my stay. Go, leave me!

I go —

CLY. Whither?

ÆG. To kill him!

CLY. To thy death thou goest!

O me! What dost thou? Hark! Dost thou not hear

The yells and threats of the whole people? Hold!

I will not leave thee.

ÆG. Nay, thou hop'st in vain

To save thy impious son from death. Hence! Peace!

Or I will else —

CLY. O yes, Ægisthus, kill me,

If thou believ'st me not. "Orestes!" Hark!

"Orestes!" How that terrible name on high

Rings everywhere! I am no longer mother

When thou 'rt in danger. Against my blood I grow

Cruel once more.

ÆG. Thou knowest well the Argives

Do hate thy face, and at the sight of thee

The fury were redoubled in their hearts.

The tumult rises. Ah, thou wicked wretch,

Thou wast the cause! For thee did I delay

Vengeance that turns on me now.

CLY. Kill me, then!

ÆG. I'll find escape some other way.

CLY. I follow —

ÆG. Ill shield wert thou for me. Leave me — away,
 away!

At no price would I have thee by my side! [Exit.

CLY. All hunt me from them! O most hapless state!

My son no longer owns me for his mother,

My husband for his wife: and wife and mother

I still must be ! O misery ! Afar
I 'll follow him, nor lose the way he went.

Enter ELECTRA.

EL. Mother, where goest thou ? Turn thy steps again
Into the palaeae. Danger —

CLY. Orestes — speak !
Where is he ? What does he do ?

EL. Orestes,
Pylades, and myself, we are all safe.
Even Ægisthus' minions pitied us.
They cried, "This is Orestes !" and the people,
"Long live Orestes ! Let Ægisthus die !"

CLY. What do I hear !

EL. Calm thyself, mother ; soon
Thou shalt behold thy son again, and soon
Th' infamous tyrant's corse —

CLY. Ah, cruel, leave me !
I go —

EL. No, stay ! The people rage, and ery
Out on thee for a parricidal wife.
Show thyself not as yet, or thou incurrest
Great peril. 'T was for this I came. In thee
A mother's agony appeared, to see
Thy children dragged to death, and thou hast now
Atoned for thy misdeed. My brother sends me
To comfort thee, to succor and to hide thee
From dreadful sights. To find Ægisthus out,
All armed meanwhile, he and his Pylades
Search everywhere. Where is the wicked wretch ?

CLY. Orestes is the wicked wretch.

EL. O Heaven !

CLY. I go to save him or to perish with him.

EL. Nay, mother, thou shalt never go. Thou ravest —

CLY. The penalty is mine. I go —

EL. O mother !

The monster that but now thy children doomed
To death, wouldst thou —

CLY. Yes, I would save him — I!
 Out of my path! My terrible destiny
 I must obey. He is my husband. All
 Too dear he cost me. I will not, cannot lose him.
 You I abhor, traitors, not children to me!
 I go to him. Loose me, thou wicked girl!
 At any risk I go, and may I only
 Reach him in time! [Exit.

EL. Go to thy fate, then, go,
 If thou wilt so, but be thy steps too late!
 Why cannot I, too, arm me with a dagger,
 To pierce with stabs a thousand-fold the breast
 Of infamous Ægisthus? O blind mother, O,
 How art thou fettered to his baseness! Yet,
 And yet I tremble — If the angry mob
 Avenge their murdered king on her — O Heaven!
 Let me go after her — But who comes here?
 Pylades, and my brother not beside him?

Enter PYLADES.

O, tell me! Orestes —

PYL. Compasses the palace
 About with swords. And now our prey is safe.
 Where lurks Ægisthus? Hast thou seen him?

EL. Nay,
 I saw and strove in vain a moment since
 To stay his maddened wife. She flung herself
 Out of this door, crying that she would make
 Herself a shield unto Ægisthus. He
 Already had fled the palace.

PYL. Durst he then
 Show himself in the sight of Argos? Why,
 Then he is slain ere this! Happy the man
 That struck him first. Nearer and louder yet
 I hear their yells.

EL. "Orestes!" Ah, were 't so!

PYL. Look at him in his fury where he comes!

Enter ORESTES and his followers.

OR. No man of you attempt to slay Ægisthus :
There is no wounding sword here save my own.
Ægisthus, ho ! Where art thou, coward ? Speak !
Ægisthus, where art thou ? Come forth : it is
The voice of Death that calls thee ! Thou comest not ?
Ah, villain, dost thou hide thyself ? In vain :
The midmost deep of Erebus should not hide thee.
Thou shalt soon see if I be Atrides' son.

EL. He is not here ; he —

OR. Traitors ! You perchance
Have slain him without me ?

PYL. Before I came
He had fled the palace.

OR. In the palace still
Somewhere he lurks ; but I will drag him forth ;
By his soft locks I 'll drag him with my hand :
There is no prayer, nor god, nor force of hell
Shall snatch thee from me. I will make thee plough
The dust with thy vile body to the tomb
Of Agamemnon, — I will drag thee thither
And pour out there all thine adulterous blood.

EL. Orestes, dost thou not believe me ? — me !

OR. Who 'rt thou ? I want Ægisthus.

EL. He is fled.

OR. He 's fled, and you, ye wretches, linger here ?
But I will find him.

Enter CLYTEMNESTRA.

CLY. O, I have pity, son !

OR. Pity ? Whose son am I ? Atrides' son
Am I.

CLY. Ægisthus, loaded with chains —

OR. He lives yet ?
O joy ! Let me go slay him !
CLY. Nay, kill me !

I slew thy father — I alone. Ægisthus
Had no guilt in it.

OR. Who, who grips my arm?
Who holds me back? O madness! Ah, Ægisthus!
I see him; they drag him hither — Off with thee!

CLY. Orestes, dost thou not know thy mother?

OR. Die,
Ægisthus! By Orestes' hand, die, villain! [Exit.

CLY. Ah, thou'st escaped me. Thou shalt slay me first!
[Exit.

EL. Pylades, go! Run, run! O, stay her! Fly;
Bring her back hither! [Exit PYLADES.

I shudder! She is still
His mother, and he must have pity on her.
Yet only now she saw her children stand
Upon the brink of an ignoble death,
And were her sorrow and her daring then
As great as they are now for him? At last
The day so long desired has come; at last,
Tyrant, thou diest; and once more I hear
The palace all resound with wails and cries,
As on that horrible and bloody night,
Which was my father's last, I heard it ring.
Already hath Orestes struck the blow,
The mighty blow; already is Ægisthus
Fallen — the tumult of the crowd proclaims it.
Behold Orestes conqueror, his sword
Dripping with blood!

Enter ORESTES.

O brother mine, O come,
Avenger of the king of kings, our father,
Argos, and me, come to my heart!

OR. Sister,
At last thou seest me Atrides' worthy son.
Look, 't is Ægisthus' blood! I hardly saw him

And ran to slay him where he stood, forgetting
 To drag him to our father's sepulchre.
 Full twice seven times I plunged and plunged my sword
 Into his cowardly and quaking heart;
 Yet have I slaked not my long thirst of vengeance.

EL. Then Clytemnestra did not come in time
 To stay thine arm?

OR. And who had been enough
 For that? To stay mine arm? I hurled myself
 Upon him; not more swift the thunderbolt.
 The coward wept, and those vile tears the more
 Filled me with hate. A man that durst not die
 Slew thee, my father!

EL. Now is our sire avenged.
 Calm thyself now, and tell me, did thine eyes
 Behold not Pylades?

OR. I saw Ægisthus;
 None other. Where is dear Pylades? And why
 Did he not second me in this glorious deed?

EL. I had confided to his care our mad
 And desperate mother.

OR. I knew nothing of them.

Enter PYLADES.

EL. See, Pylades returns — O Heavens, what do I see?
 Returns alone?

OR. And sad? O, wherefore sad,
 Part of myself, art thou? Know'st not I've slain
 Yon villain? Look, how with his life-blood yet
 My sword is dripping! Ah, thou didst not share
 His death-blow with me! Feed then on this sight
 Thine eyes, my Pylades!

PYL. O sight! Orestes,
 Give me that sword.

OR. And wherefore?

PYL. Give it me.

OR. Take it.

PYL. O, listen. We may not tarry longer
Within these borders ; come —

OR. But what —

EL. O, speak !

Where 's Clytemnestra ?

OR. Leave her ; she is perchance
Kindling the pyre unto her traitor husband.

PYL. O, thou hast far more than fulfilled thy vengeance.
Come, now, and ask no more.

OR. What dost thou say ?

EL. Our mother ! I beseech thee yet again !

Pylades— O, what chill is this that creeps
Through all my veins ?

PYL. The heavens —

EL. Ah, she is dead !

OR. Hath turned her dagger, maddened, on herself.

EL. Alas ! Pylades. Why dost thou not answer ?

OR. Speak ! What hath been ?

PLY. Slain —

OR. And by whose hand ?

PYL. Come.

EL. (*to ORESTES*). Thou slewest her.

OR. I parricide ?

PYL. Unknowing

Thou plungedst in her heart thy sword, as blind
With rage thou rannest on Ægisthus —

OR. O,

What horror seizes me ! I parricide ?

My sword ! Pylades, give it me ; I 'll have it —

PYL. It shall not be.

EL. Brother —

OR. Who calls me brother ?

Thou, haply, impious wretch, thou that didst save me
To life and matricide ? Give me my sword !

My sword ! O fury ! Where am I ? What is it

That I have done ? Who stays me ? Who follows me ?

Ah, whither shall I fly, where hide myself? —
 O father, dost thou look on me askance?
 Thou wouldst have blood of me, and this is blood;
 For thee alone — for thee alone I shed it.

EL. Orestes, Orestes — miserable brother!
 He hears us not, ah! he is mad. Forever,
 Pylades, we must go beside him.

PYL. Hard,
 Inevitable law of ruthless Fate!

Alfieri himself wrote a critical comment on each of his tragedies, discussing their qualities and the question of their failure or success dispassionately enough. For example, he frankly says of his *Maria Stuarda* that it is the worst tragedy he ever wrote, and the only one that he could wish not to have written; of his *Agamennone*, that all the good in it came from the author and all the bad from the subject; of his *Filippo II.*, that it may make a very terrible impression indeed of mingled pity and horror, or that it may disgust, through the cold atrocity of Philip, even to the point of nausea. On the *Orestes* we may very well consult him more at length. "This tragic action," he declares, "has no other motive or development, nor admits any other passion, than an implacable revenge; but the passion of revenge (though very strong by nature), having become greatly enfeebled among civilized peoples, is regarded as a vile passion, and its effects are wont to be blamed and looked upon with loathing. Nevertheless, when it is just, when the offence received is very atrocious, when the persons and the circumstances are such that no human law can indemnify the aggrieved and punish the aggressor, then revenge, under the names of war, invasion, conspiracy, the duel, and the like, ennobles itself, and so

works upon our minds as not only to be endured but to be admirable and sublime." In his *Orestes* he confesses that he sees much to praise and very little to blame: "Orestes, to my thinking, is ardent in sublime degree, and this daring character of his, together with the perils he confronts, may greatly diminish in him the atrocity and coldness of a meditated revenge. . . . Let those who do not believe in the force of a passion for high and just revenge add to it, in the heart of Orestes, private interest, the love of power, rage at beholding his natural heritage occupied by a murderous usurper, and then they will have a sufficient reason for all his fury. Let them consider also the ferocious ideas in which he must have been nurtured by Strophius, king of Phocis, the persecutions which he knows to have been everywhere moved against him by the usurper, — his being, in fine, the son of Agamemnon, and greatly priding himself thereon, — and all these things will certainly account for the vindictive passion of Orestes. . . .

"Clytemnestra is very difficult to treat in this tragedy, since she must be here,

‘Now wife, now mother, never wife nor mother,’

which is much easier to say in a verse than to manage in the space of five acts. Yet I believe that Clytemnestra, through the terrible remorse she feels, the vile treatment which she receives from Ægisthus, and the awful perplexity in which she lives . . . will be considered sufficiently punished by the spectator.

"Ægisthus is never able to elevate his soul; . . . he will always be an unpleasing, vile, and difficult personage to manage well; a character that brings

small praise to the author when made sufferable, and much blame if not made so. . . .

“ I believe the fourth and fifth acts would produce the highest effect on the stage if well represented. In the fifth, there is a movement, a brevity, a rapidly operating heat, that ought to touch, agitate, and singularly surprise the spirit. So it seems to me, but perhaps it is not so.”

This analysis is not only very amusing for the candor with which Alfieri praises himself, but it is also remarkable for the justice with which the praise is given, and the strong, conscious hold which it shows him to have had upon his creations. It leaves one very little to add, but I cannot help saying that I think the management of Clytemnestra especially admirable throughout. She loves Ægisthus with the fatal passion which no scorn or cruelty on his part can quench; but while he is in power and triumphant, her heart turns tenderly to her hapless children, whom she abhors as soon as his calamity comes; then she has no thought but, to save him. She can join her children in hating the murder which she has herself done on Agamemnon, but she cannot avenge it on Ægisthus, and thus expiate her crime in their eyes. Ægisthus is never able to conceive of the unselfishness of her love; he believes her ready to betray him when danger threatens, and to shield herself behind him from the anger of the Argives; it is a deep knowledge of human nature that makes him interpose the memory of her unatoned-for crime between her and any purpose of good.

Orestes always sees his revenge as something sacred, and that is a great scene in which he offers his dagger to Clytemnestra and bids her kill Ægisthus with it, believing for the instant that even she must exult to

share his vengeance. His feeling towards Ægisthus never changes; it is not revolting to the spectator, since Orestes is so absolutely unconscious of wrong in putting him to death. He shows his blood-stained sword to Pylades with a real sorrow that his friend should not also have enjoyed the rapture of killing the usurper. His language is fiercely terse, and his story of his escape on the night of Agamemnon's murder is as simple and grand in movement as that of figures in an antique bas-relief. Here and elsewhere one feels how Alfieri does not paint, but sculptures his scenes and persons, cuts their outlines deep, and strongly carves their attitudes and expression.

Electra is the worthy sister of Orestes, and the family likeness between them is sharply traced. She has all his faith in the sacredness of his purpose, while she has, woman-like, a far keener and more specific hatred of Ægisthus. The ferocity of her exultation when Clytemnestra and Ægisthus upbraid each other is terrible, but the picture she draws for Orestes of their mother's life is touched with an exquisite filial pity. She seems to me studied with marvellous success.

The close of the tragedy I think very noble indeed, full of fire and life, yet never wanting in a sort of lofty, austere grace, that lapses at last into a truly statuesque despair. Orestes mad, with Electra and Pylades on either side: it is the attitude and gesture of Greek sculpture, a group forever fixed in the imperishable sorrow of stone.

In reading Alfieri, I am always struck with what I may call the narrowness of his tragedies. They have height and depth, but not breadth. The range of sentiment is as limited in any one of them as the range of phrase in this Orestes, where the recurrence of the

same epithets, horrible, bloody, terrible, fatal, awful, is not apparently felt by the poet as monotonous. Four or five persons, each representing a purpose or a passion, occupy the scene, and obviously contribute by every word and deed to the advancement of the tragic action; and this narrowness and rigidity of intent would be intolerable, if the tragedies were not so brief: I do not think any of them is much longer than a single act of one of Shakespeare's plays. They are in all other ways equally unlike Shakespeare's plays. When you read *Macbeth* or *Hamlet*, you find yourself in a world where the interests and passions are complex and divided against themselves, as they are here and now. The action progresses fitfully, as events do in life; it is promoted by the things that seem to retard it; and it includes long stretches of time and many places. When you read *Orestes*, you find yourself attendant upon an imminent calamity, which nothing can avert or delay. In a solitude like that of dreams, those hapless phantasms, dark types of remorse, of cruel ambition, of inexorable revenge, move swiftly on the fatal end. They do not grow or develop on the imagination; their character is stamped at once, and they have but to act it out. There is no lingering upon episodes, no digressions, no reliefs. They cannot stir from that spot where they are doomed to expiate or consummate their crimes; one little day is given them, and then all is over.

Both kinds of tragedy are in the region of the ideal, but Alfieri idealizes passions and Shakespeare idealizes men. If art is a pure essence, separable from the life we know, and enjoyable in and for itself, we must allow to Alfieri the more artistic expression. Mr. Lowell, in his magnificent essay on Dryden, speaks of

“ a style of poetry whose great excellence was that it was in perfect sympathy with the genius of the people among whom it came into being,” and this I conceive to be the virtue of the Alfierian poetry. The Italians love beauty of form, and we Goths love picturesque effect ; and Alfieri has little or none of the kind of excellence which we enjoy. But while

“ I look and own myself a happy Goth,”

I have moods, in the presence of his simplicity and severity, when I feel that he and all the classicists may be right. When I see how much he achieves with his sparing phrase, his sparsely populated scene, his narrow plot and angular design, when I find him perfectly sufficient in expression and entirely adequate in suggestion, I am seized with a dismaying doubt of the Romantic principle, that it is after all barbarous, clumsy, rudely profuse, uncouth. Then the Classic alone appears elegant and true—till I read Shakespeare again ; or till I turn to Nature, whom I do not find sparing or severe, but full of variety and change and relief, and yet having a sort of elegance and truth of her own.

In the treatment of historical subjects Alfieri allowed himself every freedom. He makes Lorenzo de' Medici, the most polite, gentle, and considerate of usurpers, a brutal and very insolent tyrant, a tyrant after the high Roman fashion, a tyrant almost after the fashion of the late Edwin Forrest. Yet there are some good passages in the *Congiura dei Pazzi*, of the peculiarly hard Alfierian sort : —

“ An enemy insulted and not slain !
 What breast in triple iron armed, but needs
 Must tremble at him ? ”

is a saying of Giuliano de' Medici, who, when asked if he does not fear one of the conspirators, puts the whole political wisdom of the sixteenth century into his answer, —

“ Being feared, I fear.”

The Filippo of Alfieri must always have an interest for English readers because of its chance relation to Keats, who, sick to death of consumption, bought a copy of Alfieri when on his way to Rome. As Mr. Lowell relates in his sketch of the poet's life, the dying man opened the book at the second page, and read the lines, — perhaps the tenderest that Alfieri ever wrote, —

“ Misero me ! sollievo a me non resta
Altro che il pianto, e il pianto è delitto ! ”

Keats read these words, and then laid down the book and opened it no more. The closing scene of the fourth act of this tragedy can well be studied as a striking example of Alfieri's extraordinary power of condensation.

Some of the non-political tragedies of Alfieri are still played ; Ristori plays his *Mirra*, and Salvini his *Saul* ; but I believe there is now no Italian critic who praises him so entirely as Giudici did. Yet the poet finds a warm defender against the French and German critics in De Sanctis,* a very clever and brilliant Italian, who accounts for Alfieri in a way that helps to make all Italian things more intelligible to us. He is speaking of Alfieri's epoch and social circumstances : —

“ Education had been classic for ages. Our ideal was Rome and Greece, our heroes Brutus and Cato, our books Livy, Tacitus, and Plutarch ; and if this was

* *Saggi Critici*. Di Francesco di Sanctis. Napoli : Antonio Morano. 1859.

true of all Europe, how much more so of Italy, where this history might be called domestic, a thing of our own, a part of our traditions, still alive to the eye in our cities and monuments. From Dante to Machiavelli, from Machiavelli to Metastasio, our classical tradition was never broken. . . . In the social dissolution of the last century, all disappeared except this ideal. In fact, in that first enthusiasm, when the minds of men confidently sought final perfection, it passed from the schools into life, ruled the imagination, inflamed the will. People lived and died Romanly. . . . The situations that Alfieri has chosen in his tragedies have a visible relation to the social state, to the fears and to the hopes of his own time. It is always resistance to oppression, of man against man, of people against tyrant. . . . In the classicism of Alfieri there is no positive side. It is an ideal Rome and Greece, outside of time and space, floating in the vague . . . which his contemporaries filled up with their own life."

Giuseppe Arnaud, in his admirable criticisms on the Patriotic Poets of Italy, has treated of the literary side of Alfieri in terms that seem to me on the whole very just: "He sacrificed the foreshortening, which has so great a charm for the spectator, to the sculptured full figure that always presents itself face to face with you, and in entire relief. The grand passions, which are commonly sparing of words, are in his system condemned to speak much, and to explain themselves too much. . . . To what shall we attribute that respectful somnolence which nowadays reigns over the audience during the recitation of Alfieri's tragedies, if they are not sustained by some theatrical celebrity? You will certainly say, to the mediocrity of the actors. But I hold that the tragic effect can be produced even

by mediocre actors, if this effect truly abounds in the plot of the tragedy. . . . I know that these opinions of mine will not be shared by the great majority of the Italian public, and so be it. The contrary will always be favorable to one who greatly loved his country, always desired to serve her, and succeeded in his own time and own manner. Whoever should say that Alfieri's tragedies, in spite of many eminent merits, were constructed on a theory opposed to grand scenic effects and to one of the two bases of tragedy, namely, compassion, would certainly not say what was far from the truth. And yet, with all this, Alfieri will still remain that dry, harsh blast which swept away the noxious miasms with which the Italian air was infected. He will still remain that poet who aroused his country from its dishonorable slumber, and inspired its heart with intolerance of servile conditions and with regard for its dignity. Up to his time we had bleated, and he roared."

"In fact," says D'Azeglio, "one of the merits of that proud heart was to have found Italy Metastasian and left it Alfierian; and his first and greatest merit was, to my thinking, that he discovered Italy, so to speak, as Columbus discovered America, and initiated the idea of Italy as a nation. I place this merit far beyond that of his verses and his tragedies."

Besides his tragedies, Alfieri wrote, as I have already stated, some comedies in his last years; but I must own my ignorance of all six of them; and he wrote various satires, odes, sonnets, epigrams, and other poems. Most of them are of political interest; the *Miso-Gallo* is an expression of his scorn and hatred of the French nation; the *America Liberata* celebrates our separation from England; the *Etruria Vendicata* praises the

murder of the abominable Alessandro de' Medici by his kinsman, Lorenzaccio. None of the satires, whether on kings, aristocrats, or people, have lent themselves easily to my perusal; the epigrams are signally unreadable, but some of the sonnets are very good. He seems to find in their limitations the same sort of strength that he finds in his restricted tragedies; and they are all in the truest sense sonnets.

Here is one, which loses, of course, by translation. In this and other of my versions, I have rarely found the English too terse for the Italian, and often not terse enough: —

HE IMAGINES THE DEATH OF HIS LADY.

The sad bell that within my bosom aye
 Clamors and bids me still renew my tears,
 Doth stun my senses and my soul bewray
 With wandering fantasies and cheating fears;
 The gentle form of her that is but ta'en
 A little from my sight I seem to see
 At life's bourn lying faint and pale with pain, —
 My love that to these tears abandons me.
 "O my own true one," tenderly she cries,
 "I grieve for thee, love, that thou winnest naught
 Save hapless life with all thy many sighs."
 "Life? Never! Though thy blessed steps have taught
 My feet the path in all well-doing, stay! —
 At this last pass 't is mine to lead the way."

There is a still more characteristic sonnet of Alfieri's, with which I shall close, as I began, in the very open air of his autobiography: —

HIS PORTRAIT.

Thou mirror of veracious speech sublime,
 What I am like in soul and body, show:

Red hair, — in front grown somewhat thin with time ;
Tall stature, with an earthward head bowed low ;
A meagre form, with two straight legs beneath ;
An aspect good ; white skin with eyes of blue ;
A proper nose ; fine lips and choicest teeth ;
Face paler than a thronéd king's in hue ;
Now hard and bitter, yielding now and mild ;
Malignant never, passionate alway,
With mind and heart in endless strife embroiled ;
Sad mostly, and then gayest of the gay.
Achilles now, Thersites in his turn :
Man, art thou great or vile ? Die, and thou 'lt learn !

The following translation of Alfieri's autobiography is reprinted from the London edition of 1810, and is in the main a faithful version, though it often lacks the peculiar color and *fury* of the original.



INTRODUCTION.



SELF-LOVE is unquestionably the chief motive which leads any one to speak, and more especially to write, respecting himself. I shall not, therefore, offer to my readers any weak apologies or false and unsatisfactory reasons for having written these memoirs, since they would afford a bad specimen of my future veracity. I frankly acknowledge, that among all the different sentiments which induced me to become my own biographer, the most powerful was self-love. Nature has implanted this feeling, in a greater or less degree, in the breast of every individual; she has been lavish of it to authors, and particularly to poets, or those who term themselves such. This precious gift is the principal motive of all the great actions of man, when he unites to a knowledge of his own powers an enlightened enthusiasm for the sublime and beautiful, which are in fact only one and the same thing.

Without dwelling longer on these general reasons, I shall proceed to notice those in particular which induced me to compose these memoirs; and afterwards point out the rules I prescribed to myself in the execution of this task.

Even, at present, my literary productions are pretty voluminous. Hence it is not unnatural to suppose that a few individuals, either among my contemporaries or their descendants, to whom my productions may have afforded some degree of pleasure, will be anxious to know something of my character. This opinion cannot, I flatter myself, be deemed presumptuous, since I daily observe the lives of authors read with avidity, who are perhaps less known from the merit than the number of their works: besides, if no other reason existed, it is certain, as soon as I should be no more, some bookseller, in order to enhance his gains on a new edition of my works, would prefix to it a life of the author. This life would probably be written by some one who was completely ignorant of the events which compose it, and who drew the materials from doubtful or partial sources. In short, it could never be equally authentic as one from my own pen, since a writer in the pay of a publisher usually panegyricizes the author; both flattering themselves, by this means, to insure a greater sale for his works. In order, therefore, to render this biographical sketch more accurate and as impartial as any which could be written after my death, I, who was never known to forfeit my promise, here covenant with myself and my readers to free myself, as much as it is in the power of man to do, from the mist of passion and prejudice, in the delineation of my own character.

I have entered into this engagement because, on the most rigorous scrutiny of my own character, I have found, or believe I have found, the good preponderate over the evil. Besides, if I possess not the courage or the indiscretion to speak of myself as I deserve, I shall, at least, not have the baseness to gloss over my faults

by advancing an untruth. As to the method which I propose to follow, in order to spare, or, at least, to abridge the trouble of the reader, by leaving him at liberty to pass over those years of my life which may appear to him the least interesting, it is my intention to divide this work into five epochs, corresponding with the five ages of man, — *infancy, adolescence, youth, manhood, and old age*; but from the manner in which I have written the three first parts, and more than a half of the fourth, I cannot flatter myself with being able to preserve that brevity which I have been always solicitous to attain in my works, and which would be more particularly necessary and praiseworthy when speaking of myself.

I am, moreover, afraid that in the fifth part, should I ever reach that period, I may fall into that garrulity which is the inseparable concomitant of imbecile old age. If, then, in consequence of this declension of my faculties, I should become tedious and diffuse, I entreat beforehand that the reader may forgive this fault, and throw aside the last part without perusing it.

When I say that I cannot flatter myself with being so concise as I could wish, even in the four first periods, I do not certainly mean to extend them to a ridiculous length by the detail of a thousand minute circumstances. I shall only relate those which, in my opinion, may contribute to the knowledge of man in general, whose nature we can best understand by studying ourselves.

It is not my intention to speak of any individual whose history is not, in some way or other, connected with my own. I profess only to write facts which have a relation to myself, and not those in which others are concerned. I shall avoid naming any per-

son, and if I recall the remembrance of a few, it will only be in regard to things which are either indifferent or praiseworthy. The object of this work relates chiefly to the study of man in general. And of what man can any one speak so correctly as of himself? What other can he study more easily, know more intimately, or estimate with greater accuracy, — having for so many years penetrated into his most secret thoughts?

As to the style of these memoirs, dictated by the heart and not the head, I have undeviatingly throughout employed that spontaneous and natural simplicity which, in my opinion, is best suited to a subject of this nature.





MEMOIRS
OF
VITTORIO ALFIERI.

FIRST EPOCH.

INFANCY.

INCLUDING NINE YEARS OF MY LIFE.

I.



WAS born in the city of Asti, in Piedmont, on the 17th of January, 1749, of noble, wealthy, and respectable parents. I particularly mention these three circumstances, because I regard them as extremely fortunate, for the following reasons: my noble birth enabled me, without incurring the charge of envy or meanness, to despise those nobles who were distinguished only by their origin, and to unveil their follies, their abuses, and crimes, while at the same time its influence was sufficiently powerful to prevent me sullyng the dignity of the art I professed. The affluence of my circumstances enabled me to dedicate my labors to the interests of truth; and

the probity of my parents prevented me from blushing that I had been born a gentleman. If any one of these circumstances had been wanting, my different works must necessarily have suffered by it, and I myself might even perhaps have been either a worse philosopher or a less respectable man.

The name of my father was Anthony Alfieri; that of my mother Monica Maillard de Tournon. She was of Savoyard origin, as her barbarous surnames sufficiently indicate, though her family had been long settled at Turin. My father, who had been bred to no profession, was a man of strict morals, and wholly devoid of ambition, as I have been informed by those who were most intimately acquainted with him.

Possessing a fortune adequate to his rank in life, gentle in his manners, and moderate in all his desires, his days glided happily on. When above the age of fifty, he became enamored of my mother, whom he made his wife; she was still very young, and the widow of the Marquis of Cacherano, a nobleman of Asti. A daughter, whose birth preceded mine by two years, rendered my father more than ever anxious for a son; hence my entrance into the world was hailed with every demonstration of joy. I know not whether he merely rejoiced at this event, as most aged men are apt to do under similar circumstances, or whether his satisfaction arose from his extreme anxiety to perpetuate his name and family to future generations. It probably proceeded from a combination of both these causes. Be this, however, as it may, I was sent to nurse in the village of Rovigliasco, two miles from Asti, where he came to see me almost every day on foot, being a man wholly destitute of ostentation, and extremely simple in his manners. He was, at this period, above sixty years

of age, though still strong and robust; but, during one of his daily excursions, in which he paid no attention to the state of the weather, he so overheated himself, that he was seized with an inflammation in his lungs, which in a few days conducted him to the tomb.

I had not then completed my first year. My mother was pregnant with another boy, who died in his infancy, so that there only remained to her a boy and girl of my father's, and two daughters and a son by her first husband, the Marquis of Cacherano. My mother, though a widow for the second time, being still young, espoused as a third husband the Chevalier Hyacinth Alfieri de Magliano, sprung from a different branch of a family bearing the same name as my own. The chevalier, by the death of his eldest brother, who left no issue, became heir to all his immense possessions. With this husband, who was nearly about her own age, of a prepossessing figure, and noble and dignified manners, my amiable mother enjoyed the most perfect happiness.

When writing these memoirs, at the age of forty-one, this union still exists. For more than thirty-seven years, this respectable couple have exhibited a model of every domestic virtue; they are beloved, respected, and admired by all their countrymen, particularly my mother, who, animated by a zealous and heroic piety, entirely devotes herself to the relief of the indigent and unfortunate.

During this period she successively lost her eldest son and daughter, the fruit of her first marriage, as well as the two boys whom she had by her third husband, so that in her old age I am the only one of her sons who survives. The fatality of my destiny compels me to reside at a distance from her, a circumstance which has proved to me a source of much uneasiness, and to

which no consideration would have tempted me to submit, had I not been well assured that she found in the energy of her character and in true piety an ample compensation for the loss of her children. I trust I may be pardoned this digression in favor of the best of mothers.

II.

I RETAIN no recollection of the occurrences which took place during my boyish days, except that a paternal uncle, when I was only three or four years of age, placed me upon an old chest, and while caressing me, gave me some excellent sweetmeats. I remember little more respecting him than the figure of the square shoes which he usually wore. Several years after his death, the sight of a pair of old-fashioned boots, with similar toes, suddenly recalled to my mind the sensations I had experienced on receiving the caresses and sweetmeats from my uncle, whom I never saw after I acquired the use of reason; the words, the manners, of the worthy old man, even the very taste of the sweetmeats, vividly recurred to my imagination. I have related this infantile anecdote, as it cannot be wholly useless to the individual who wishes to investigate the mechanism of our ideas, and the relations which subsist between thoughts and sensations.

When about five years of age, I was reduced to the last extremity by a violent dysentery. It seems to me as if I still retained in my mind a certain recollection of my torments. I knew not then what death was, yet I anxiously looked forward to it as the termination of my sufferings. I had heard it said, when my youngest brother died, that he would become a little angel.

Notwithstanding all my efforts to recall my primitive

ideas, or the sensations I had felt previous to my sixth year, I can only remember these two. After the nuptials of my mother, my sister Julia and myself left our paternal mansion, and accompanied her to the house of her husband, who proved more than a father to us during the time we remained under his roof.

My mother's eldest son and daughter were successively sent to Turin; the one to the college of Jesuits, and the other to a convent. Shortly after my sister Julia was placed in a convent at Asti. I perfectly remember this little domestic event, as my faculties began about that period to unfold themselves. I still recollect the grief I experienced, and the tears I shed, on this separation, though we were for some time permitted to see each other daily. Upon reviewing the sensations which I then experienced, I found they were similar to those I afterwards felt, when, in the heyday of youth, I was compelled to relinquish the society of any beloved female, or sincere friends, to whom I was ardently attached; for I have been fortunate enough, during my progress through life, to possess three or four of the latter, — a happiness denied to many others, perhaps far better deserving of it than myself. The recollection of the grief I suffered, on the separation from my sister, has afforded me a convincing proof that all the affections of man, however different they may appear, originate from the same principle.

After the departure of the other children, a worthy priest, named Ivaldi, was taken into the family, as my preceptor. From him I learned writing, and the four first rules of arithmetic; he also taught me to read Cornelius Nepos, as well as Phædrus's fables; but the good Father Ivaldi was himself exceedingly ignorant, as I afterwards discovered; and if I had remained under

his tuition after my ninth year, my learning must necessarily have continued stationary. My parents themselves were wholly destitute of literary acquirements, and I have frequently heard them repeat the commonplace maxim of those days, that a nobleman had no occasion to be a doctor.

I had, however, a natural inclination for study, especially since the departure of my sister; besides, the perfect solitude in which I lived with my tutor tended to generate a disposition to melancholy and a habit of abstraction.

III.

I MUST here mention a singular circumstance concerning the development of my romantic feelings. From the period of my sister's departure, I had become much more melancholy and serious than usual. My visits to this beloved sister became gradually less frequent, because, in order that I might bestow an undivided attention on my studies, I only had permission to visit her on certain holidays and festivals. I experienced a species of consolation in my solitude, from the habit I had acquired of daily frequenting a Carmelite church adjoining our house, from listening to the music, observing the officiating monks, from attending to the ceremonies of high mass, the processions, and similar spectacles. In a few months I ceased to think so often of my sister, and in the end her image scarcely ever occurred to my mind; so much was I occupied by attending morning and evening at the Carmelites. To this attendance I was induced by the following reason: From the period when my sister was sent to the convent, I had never beheld a youthful countenance, except those of the Carmelite novices, most of whom were about

fourteen or sixteen years of age, and who assisted at the different festivals, habited in the white robes of their order. Their features, which partook of the feminine character, made on my tender and artless heart the same impression as those of my sister, and I felt the same desire to again behold them. This sentiment, modified in so many different ways, was however equivalent to love. When reflecting on it, several years afterwards, I became more fully convinced of this truth; for at the time I was wholly unacquainted with the true nature of my own feelings. I merely obeyed the pure impulse of nature. So ardent did my innocent attachment to these novices become, that I unceasingly thought on them and their functions. Sometimes my imagination represented them to me holding their wax tapers in their hands, performing the service with a devout and angelic air, sometimes burning incense at the foot of the altar. Wholly absorbed by these images, I neglected my studies; all employment was irksome to me, and I became disgusted with society. Being one day left alone by my preceptor, I sought in my Latin and Italian dictionaries for the word *Monk*; I immediately cancelled it, and wrote that of *Father* in its stead; thus conceiving, I knew not why, that I was ennobling the young monks whom I saw every day, but with whom I had never conversed, and respecting whom I could not define my own sentiments. The reason which induced me to make this alteration was, having often heard the term *Monk* pronounced with a sort of contempt, and the word *Father* with veneration and affection. I carefully concealed from my preceptor those rude corrections awkwardly made with a pen. He neither perceived nor appeared to suspect it; such an idea could never enter his mind. Whoever reflects on

this trifling action, and endeavors to trace in it the germ of human passions, will not perhaps conceive it so puerile and ridiculous as it may at first sight appear.

These singular effects, proceeding from a sentiment wholly unknown to myself, but yet acting so powerfully on my imagination, gave rise to that melancholy which became gradually a predominant trait of my character, and ultimately influenced all the other qualities of my mind.

When about seven or eight years of age, finding myself in one of these melancholy humors, perhaps occasioned by the weak state of my health, after having seen my preceptor and attendant go out, I darted from my little cabinet, which was level with the ground, and proceeded to a second court, covered with a profusion of plants, which I immediately began to tear up by handfuls, and devour with the greatest avidity, notwithstanding their pungent and bitter taste. I had heard hemlock mentioned as being an herb fatal to the life of man ; and though I wished not to die, nor indeed scarcely knew what death was, nevertheless, led away by a sort of natural instinct, mingled with some secret and undefined grief, I eagerly devoured the plants which fell in my way, under the supposition that I had discovered hemlock ; but, disgusted with their nauseous and bitter taste, and finding myself sick at stomach, I went into a garden adjoining the house, without being seen by any one, and disgorged what I had swallowed. Returning to my chamber, I remained alone, without uttering a word, experiencing a slight colic and pains in my stomach. On my preceptor's return, he did not remark my uneasiness, and I was silent on the subject. Shortly after I was summoned to dinner, and my mother, on perceiving my eyes swollen and inflamed as

they usually are after violent retching, insisted on knowing what had happened. While she continued to importune me, the colic pains increased so much that I could not eat, nevertheless I still obstinately remained silent, and made the greatest efforts to conceal my sufferings. On attentively observing me for some time, she became more and more convinced that I really labored under some severe ailment, and at the same time, noticing the greenish color of my lips, which I had forgotten to wash, she became terrified, and, hastily approaching me, entreated with so much earnestness that I would impart to her the cause of my distress, that, overcome by terror and grief, I burst into tears, and avowed the truth. Some simple remedies were administered, and I suffered no injurious consequences from my folly, except a few days' seclusion in my chamber, by way of punishment, which afforded me an opportunity of brooding over my melancholy ideas.

IV.

I MUST now give a sketch of the character which I displayed at the period when reason began to dawn on my infant mind. Taciturn and calm, petulant and talkative by turns, my spirits were always in extremes; resisting force, but submissive to the voice of friendship. I was more restrained by the dread of being reprimanded, than by any other consideration; in short, though excessively timid, I was inflexible when any one attempted to overcome me by open force.

The better to account to my readers and myself for these primitive qualities, which nature had imprinted on my mind, among other little anecdotes of my childhood, I shall relate two or three which I perfectly

remember, and which clearly depict my character. Of all the punishments at any time inflicted on me, that which affected me with the most violent grief was being sent to mass, with a net on my head in the form of a nightcap, and which almost entirely concealed my hair. The first time I underwent this penance, on what occasion I do not now recollect, my preceptor dragged me by the hand to the Carmelite church already mentioned, which was never much frequented, and which at this time contained only about forty persons. This punishment afflicted me so much that for about three months my behavior was irreprehensible. This effect appears to have been chiefly produced by the two following causes: I supposed that all eyes must necessarily be fixed on the fatal nightcap, and that it rendered me extremely ugly and deformed; in short, that every one who beheld me punished in this terrible manner would regard me as the worst of culprits. But what above all pierced me to the heart, was the dread of being observed in such a situation by my revered novices. My readers will behold in these traits of my infantile feeling a picture of themselves, and of human beings of every age, since men may in some measure through life be regarded as children.

The salutary effect produced on me by this punishment gave so much satisfaction to my preceptor and my parents, that on the least appearance of a fault I was threatened with the detested nightcap, at the sight of which I always trembled, and promptly returned to my duty. Having, however, one day committed a trifling fault, to excuse which I told my mother a falsehood, this so-much-dreaded punishment was again to be inflicted on me; added to which, I was told, that in place of being conducted to the deserted Carmelite

church, I should be taken to that of Saint Martin's, which stood at a considerable distance from our house, in the centre of the city, and was always crowded at noon with the indolent votaries of fashion. Alas! what horror did I not experience! I entreated, I wept, I was in despair, but all in vain. What a night I passed! I conceived it would be the last of my life; I never closed my eyes. Amid all the misfortunes I have experienced in my progress through life, I do not recollect to have spent one more dreadful. The hour at length arrived: covered with the dreadful nightcap, weeping, howling, I set out, dragged by my preceptor, and pushed forward by the domestic. In this manner I traversed two or three streets, without encountering a living being; but as soon as we entered the more frequented parts of the city near to the church, I suddenly ceased to weep or cry, and instead of requiring to be dragged forward, I walked peaceably, and at a rapid pace, close by the side of Father Ivaldi, in the hope of partly screening myself from notice under the large sleeve of his cloak, and to which my little figure hardly reached. I arrived in the middle of the church, led by the hand like one who was blind; for in fact, having shut my eyes the moment I set my foot on the threshold, I never opened them till I was forced to kneel in my place in order to hear the mass, and even then I lowered them, so as not to distinguish any of the congregation. On leaving the church, I returned home in the same manner, despair in my heart, believing myself forever dishonored. During the remainder of the day, I neither ate, spoke, studied, nor even wept; in fact, my grief was so violent that I fell sick, and continued indisposed for several days, which so terrified my affectionate mother, that I was never again sub-

jected to a similar punishment ; while, on my part, I carefully avoided being guilty of another falsehood. I know not whether it is imputable to the happy effect of the nightcap, that I have been through life the most candid and least given to deceit of any individual with whom I am acquainted. I shall here mention another little anecdote : My maternal aunt, a lady of distinction at Turin and the widow of one of the greatest noblemen of the court, arrived on a visit at Asti, surrounded with all that pomp and splendor which make such a powerful impression on the minds of children. She remained a few days with my mother, but though she lavished on me caresses, unreasonable as it may appear, I never could become familiar with her. Before her departure, she inquired what would please me, and I should have it. But shame, timidity, and irresolution, combined with obstinacy, withheld me from making any reply except the word *nothing* ; and though all those by whom I was surrounded reiterated the question in twenty different ways, in order to draw from me a more polite answer, yet they could only gain by their importunity the repetition of the same eternal *nothing*. For some time this word was uttered with vivacity, and in a voice trembling with irritation, but at length it was accompanied with tears and interrupted by sobs. I was dismissed from their presence, as I so well merited, and shut up in my chamber, where I could repeat at my ease my favorite *nothing*, while in the mean time my aunt departed. But though I had thus obstinately refused her gifts, I had several days before stolen from one of her trunks, which had been accidentally left open, a fan, which I concealed in my bed, and which was discovered some time afterwards. On being questioned respecting it, I truly said that I intended

to present it to my sister ; a severe chastisement followed this robbery. But although a thief is certainly worse than a liar, I was neither threatened nor punished with the nightcap, so much more terrified was my mother to see me fall sick of grief than alarmed lest I should become a little knave. Dishonesty is a crime not much to be feared, nor is it difficult to eradicate among those who are not driven to it through necessity. Respect for the property of others quickly takes root, and grows up among individuals who possess wealth of their own.

I shall here only mention another anecdote respecting my first confession, when I was between seven and eight years of age.

My preceptor prepared me for this ceremony by suggesting all the various crimes of which he conceived I might have been guilty, many of which I knew not even by name. Having undergone this precious examination by Ivaldi, a day was fixed on which I was to make my little confession at the feet of Father Angelo, a Carmelite priest, who was also the confessor of my mother. When I prostrated myself before him, I remained silent, so great was the grief and repugnance I felt at being forced to reveal my secrets, my actions, and my thoughts, to one whom I scarcely knew. I believe that the father himself suggested my confession, though he declared himself satisfied, and bestowed on me absolution ; at the same time enjoining me as a penance, to throw myself before sitting down to dinner at the feet of my mother, and publicly soliciting her pardon for all my past faults. This penance was to me extremely disagreeable, not that I felt the slightest repugnance to ask pardon of my mother ; but to kneel in presence of all those who might be present, was to me an insupportable punishment. When I entered the

dining-room on my return home, where I found a large company already assembled, it seemed to me as if all eyes were fixed on me, and I threw down mine. Irresolute, confused, and immovable, I durst not approach the table where they were taking their places, though I suspected not that any one was acquainted with the penance I had been enjoined. Assuming therefore a little courage, I advanced to seat myself among the others, when my mother, regarding me with a stern aspect, inquired if I had really a right to place myself at table; if I had fulfilled my duty; and if, in short, I had nothing wherewith to reproach myself. Each of these questions went like a dagger to my heart; my mournful aspect spoke with sufficient plainness, for I was unable to articulate a single word. There were no means, however, to make me execute my penance, or even declare what it was, as my mother on her side was unwilling to commit my unfaithful confessor; so that the affair ended in this, that she lost her obeisance and I my dinner, and perhaps also the absolution given to me by Father Angelo on such a hard condition. At that period I had not, however, sagacity to discover that the father had agreed with my mother what penance it would be proper to impose on me. But the feelings of my heart supplied the place of judgment; I conceived from that period a great hatred towards the monk, and displayed very little inclination to again approach the confessional, though he never again attempted to enjoin me any public penances.

V.

MY eldest brother, the Marquis Cacherano, who for some years had pursued his studies in the College of

the Jesuits at Turin, came to spend the vacation at Asti. He was then about fourteen, and I myself nearly eight years of age; his presence afforded me at the same time a subject of pleasure and chagrin. Not being children of the same father, he was in a great measure a stranger to me, and I felt not for him any real friendship. We often sported together, and I believe habit might have produced in my mind some affection towards him; but he was older than I, had more liberty, possessed more money, and received more attention from his parents. He had likewise seen more of the world, during his stay at Turin, could construe Virgil, — and what was I yet acquainted with? He possessed many other little advantages over me, and, for the first time, envy began to spring up in my mind.

It was not, however, a base passion, because it did not lead me to hate the individual, but only ardently to desire that I might possess the same advantages, without wishing to deprive him of them. Such is the distinction I would make between the two species of envy; that which takes root in base minds displays itself in hatred, against every one possessed of the smallest superiority, and in a desire to injure and deprive them even of what cannot benefit themselves; the other, which emanates from generous souls, is evinced under the name of emulation, by an ardent longing to obtain the same superiority in an equal or even a greater degree than others. Thus we see how imperceptible is the line which separates the germ of our virtues and vices.

My brother and I passed our time sometimes in sporting together, in wrestling, and in various other exercises. In this way the summer glided on more joyously with me than usual, as I had always before

been the only child in the house, and nothing is more wearisome to the youthful mind than perfect solitude. One day, among others, which was excessively hot, when the rest of the family retired after dinner to take a nap, we amused ourselves with performing the Prussian exercise, which my brother had previously taught me. On making a half-turn to the right when marching, I fell, and struck my head against one of the andirons, which had been left by mistake in the chimney since the preceding winter. The ornamental knobs which are usually adapted to the point in front of the chimney had been broken off; it was on one of the sharp points that I wounded myself, about a finger-breadth above the left eyebrow. The scar of this wound, which was large and deep, is still visible, and will remain so through life; I sprung up without assistance, and immediately called out to my brother to say nothing, as at the time I was not sensible I had received any injury; and was besides keenly alive to the shame of having displayed so little dexterity in the performance of my exercise; but I was too late, for my brother had already flown to awaken my preceptor. The noise had even reached my mother, and the whole house was in an uproar. In the mean time I remained perfectly quiet, till, finding something warm flowing down my visage, I put up my hand, and on perceiving it was blood I began to cry bitterly. It was merely, however, through terror, for I perfectly recollect that I experienced no pain till the surgeon began to examine and dress the wound. Several weeks elapsed before it was completely healed, and for a few days I was wholly confined to my chamber, as the swelling and inflammation were so excessive as to threaten the loss of my eye.

During my convalescence, and before the bandages were thrown aside, I frequently attended the Carmelite church with the greatest pleasure, though these dressings disfigured me much more than the net nightcap, which was of a green color, neatly made, and altogether similar to those worn for ornament by the *petits-mâîtres* of Andalusia. When travelling afterwards in Spain, I myself adopted this fashion. I felt not then the least repugnance to appear in public with all my surgical dressings, either because the idea of the danger I had run flattered my childish pride, or because I associated some idea of glory with this wound. This must unquestionably have been the case, for though not now able to recall the precise ideas that passed through my mind at the time, I well remember that when any one inquired of my preceptor what accident had befallen me, and he replied it was in consequence of a fall, I always added, when performing my exercise.

It is evident, if we carefully attend to what passes in the minds of children, that we may discover the nascent principles of our virtues and vices; thus the feelings I experienced on this occasion afforded an early indication of the love of glory, though neither the priest Ivaldi nor any of my family were capable of perceiving it.

About a year after my eldest brother's return to the college at Turin, he became affected with a pulmonic complaint, which, degenerating into phthisis, soon conducted him to the tomb. At the commencement of his illness he returned from college, when I was sent to the country to preserve me from receiving any injury. In fact, he died at Asti in the course of the summer, without my having ever again seen him. In the mean time my paternal uncle, the Chevalier Pelle-

grino Alfieri, to whom the management of my property had been confided since the death of my father, and who had just returned from his travels through France, Holland, and England, paid us a visit at Asti. Being a man of great intelligence, he immediately perceived that I must remain extremely ignorant if the same system were continued in regard to my education. A few months after his arrival at Turin he wrote to my mother, to inform her that it was his determination to place me at the Academy of that city. The period of my departure coincided with the death of my brother. I can never forget the figure, actions, and discourse of my mother, who was inconsolable on this occasion. "God," she exclaimed, sobbing, "has bereaved me of one child forever, and who knows for how long a time I may be deprived of the other?" By her third husband she had an only daughter and two sons, successively born during my stay in the Academy of Turin. Her grief deeply affected me; but in a short time the desire of beholding new scenes, of travelling post in a few days, I, who had hitherto never travelled beyond fifteen miles from Asti in a carriage drawn by two peaceable oxen; in short, a thousand other infantile ideas which my vivid imagination presented to my mind tended in a great measure to assuage the grief occasioned by my brother's death, as well as by the affliction of my mother. But when the moment of departure drew nigh, I was ready to expire with grief; it cost me perhaps still more to take leave of my preceptor Ivaldi than even to bid adieu to my mother.

Placed almost by force in the carriage by a worthy old man, who was to accompany me to my uncle's at Turin, I at length set out, attended by a domestic.

He was named Andrea, from Alessandria, a youth of great intelligence, and tolerably well educated, considering his condition in life, as in our country reading and writing were not then very generally taught to the lower orders.

It was in the month of June, 1758, I know not on what day, that I left my maternal home at a very early hour in the morning. I did nothing but weep during the first stage. On changing horses I alighted in a courtyard, and being extremely thirsty, without asking for a glass of water, I approached the horses' trough, and, dipping in one of the corners of my hat, quenched my thirst without further ceremony. My mentor, informed of what I had done by the postilion, severely reprimanded me; but I replied that when people were travelling they ought to accustom themselves to everything, and that a good soldier should never drink in any other manner. How I acquired these warlike ideas I know not, for my mother had brought me up very effeminately, and had taken the most ridiculous precautions in order to preserve my health. They must have originated in a small portion of vanity, which began to display itself in my character from the moment I was freed from the restraint of authority.

I shall here terminate the first epoch of my childhood. I am now about to enter on a more extensive sphere of action, and I trust I shall be able better, though with more brevity, to depict my character than I have hitherto done. This sketch of my early infancy, which perhaps, separately taken, is very useless, will be regarded as still more so by those who, believing themselves men, forget that man is only a continuation of the child.



SECOND EPOCH.

ADOLESCENCE.

INCLUDING EIGHT YEARS OF UNPRODUCTIVE
EDUCATION.

I.

BEHOLD me then travelling with the utmost rapidity, thanks to the drink-money which I had obtained from my travelling companion to bestow on the first postilion. This gained me the good-will of the second, who posted on with incredible celerity; and from time to time turned his head, smiling, and making a sign with his eye in order to obtain a similar gratuity from the steward, who, already old, and being exhausted by relating a thousand foolish anecdotes in order to console me, afterwards fell into a profound sleep, and snored aloud. The rapid motion of the carriage conveyed to my mind a sensation of pleasure I had never before experienced; for in my mother's coach, which I indeed seldom entered, we never exceeded a slow trot. The entrance into this city by the Porta Nuova, the whole way to the Annunziata, near to which my uncle resided, appeared in my eyes so extremely beautiful and magnificent as to overwhelm me with rapture. The evening,

however, did not pass so happily away. I found myself in an unknown mansion among strangers, without my mother, without my preceptor, and in presence of my uncle, whom I had scarcely seen above once, and who was infinitely less kind and affable than my mother. I felt all the sorrow of the preceding day renewed. In a few days, however, I became habituated to all these novelties. I even acquired a degree of vivacity I had never before displayed, and which became so troublesome to my uncle that he found it necessary to restrain it. I not only kept the house in an uproar, but, having no preceptor, my time was absolutely lost. Instead, therefore, of deferring my entrance to the Academy till October, according to his original design, he sent me to it on the 1st of August, 1758.

Thus at the age of nine years and a half I suddenly found myself transplanted among strangers, wholly separated from my parent, isolated and abandoned, thus to speak, to myself; for this species of public education, if it deserve the name, has no influence over the mind of youth; and, God knows, even their studies are too often neglected. No maxims of morality, no rules for their conduct through life, are ever inculcated in their tender minds; and how, indeed, could it be done by professors, who are themselves, both in theory and practice, wholly unacquainted with the world?

This academy was a magnificent edifice of a quadrangular form, with an immense court in the middle. Two sides of the building were occupied by the pupils, the two others by the Theatre Royal and the Royal Archives. Facing the latter was that which we occupied, and which was called the second and third apartment; opposite the theatre were those of the first, of

which I shall shortly speak. The upper gallery on our side was denominated the third apartment, and was appropriated to the youngest pupils and the inferior schools. The gallery upon the first floor, called the second gallery, was reserved for adults, a half or third of whom studied at the university, an edifice contiguous to the academy; the others were occupied by those who studied military tactics. Every gallery contained at least four sleeping-rooms, in each of which eleven pupils were accommodated, over whom a priest presided, termed an assistant, and who, for the most part, was only a peasant habited in the garb of a priest, to whom no salary was allowed. Having board and lodging, these assistants generally directed their attention to the study of theology or law. Sometimes, however, old ignorant priests were appointed to this office. One third, at least, of the side of this building, called the first apartment, was occupied by the king's pages to the number of twenty or twenty-five, who were completely separated from us by the opposite angle of the large court.

As for us young students, we were, as must be obvious, very ill situated, between a theatre which we were not allowed to enter above five or six times in the year, during the carnival; and the pages, who, from attending the amusements of their royal master, seemed to enjoy a much more free and varied mode of life than our own; they even vied with those foreigners who occupied the first apartment, almost to the exclusion of the natives. They consisted chiefly of English, Russians, and Germans, and a few individuals from other states of Italy. It resembled an inn rather than an academy; they were subjected to no restraint, except that of returning before midnight. They were, besides,

allowed to go to court, and to attend public spectacles in whatever company they pleased. The greatest punishment to us poor inhabitants of the second and third apartment was the local situation of the place; being such, that, in order to reach the chapel, or repair to the dancing or fencing room, we were obliged to pass through the gallery of the first apartment, and have constantly under our eyes the insulting and unruly conduct of its foreign inmates, which we could ill reconcile with the severity of the discipline to which we were subjected, and which we compared to that of a galley-slave. Those who formed such an arrangement must have been altogether unacquainted with the nature of the human heart, otherwise they must have been aware of the baneful influence which the sight of such constant dissipation must have produced on the minds of youth.

II.

I WAS then domesticated in what was termed the best chamber of the third apartment, under the care of my domestic Andrea, who, in the absence of my mother, uncle, and every other relative, tyrannized over me with the malignity of a demon. The day after my entrance at the academy I underwent an examination in presence of the professors, that they might ascertain whether I was sufficiently qualified to be admitted into the fourth class, and they assured me I might very readily be transferred to the third in three months, if I pursued my studies with assiduity. It was now that I first became sensible of the power of emulation, since in conjunction with other youths somewhat older than myself, I was admitted to a new examination in the month of November, in consequence of which I rose to

the third class. Our master was a priest, named Degiovanni, if possible more ignorant than even my first preceptor, Ivaldi, and who had not like him any affection towards me, or much solicitude for my improvement, having the charge of fifteen or sixteen scholars, who had all an equal right to that attention, of which he was not very prodigal.

It was thus I was trained up in this little school, the most ignorant among the ignorant, and under the care of masters not much more enlightened than ourselves. We had given us to translate Cornelius Nepos, and some of the Eclogues of Virgil. We composed very foolish insipid exercises, so that in any other college, where the pursuits of the pupils were better directed, we would have at most appeared as a very backward fourth class. Stimulated, however, by emulation, I had outstripped the best of my companions; but as soon as I had attained this eminence I slackened my zeal, and sunk into a kind of torpor. This was, perhaps, excusable, as nothing could exceed the wearisomeness and insipidity of such studies. We rendered, it is true, the Lives of Cornelius Nepos into Italian; but none of us, not even the master himself, knew the history of the individuals whose lives we translated, what country had given them birth, at what period and under what government they flourished, nor, in short, what was meant by a government. All our ideas were limited, confused, or erroneous; there were no objects either to attract the scholar or the master. Our time was shamefully lost; not through want of application, for those who exerted the most had nothing to learn. In this manner the best days of our youth were consumed in vain. The whole of the year 1759 was wasted in similar pursuits, after which I was trans-

ferred to the higher classes. The master, Father Amatis, who was an intelligent and sagacious priest, afforded me all the information in his power; it was under his tuition I received the most improvement, and as far as the absurd mode of study established in these classes would admit, I became a considerable proficient in the Latin. About this time my emulation was still further excited by a youth, who was my rival in composing exercises, and who sometimes succeeded better than myself. He left me still farther behind in the exercise of memory, sometimes reciting six hundred verses of Virgil's *Georgics*, without stopping or making a single mistake; while I, on the contrary, could never repeat above four hundred, and those very incorrectly; a circumstance which gave me great uneasiness. As far as I can now recall to mind my feelings on the occasion, it appears to me that even in these childish disputes my character was not naturally bad; for though suffocated with rage, and though I frequently burst into tears at my defeat, and even violently reproached my rival, yet either from his being better tempered than myself, or that I became appeased without knowing why, we seldom fought, though nearly of equal strength; and, in fact, lived generally on terms of friendship with each other. I believe my infantile, yet unbounded, ambition found consolation, and a species of recompense for the inferiority of my memory, from the success I enjoyed in regard to my exercises, for the composition of which I usually bore away the prize. Besides, this rival of mine had something so frank, noble, and prepossessing about him, that it was utterly impossible to hate him. I evinced from my earliest infancy an innate love for everything great and noble, both in the animate and inanimate works of

creation ; whatever was stamped with this character prejudiced my mind in the first instance, and for a time clouded my judgment, and prevented me from discovering the truth.

Though during the year I attended these classes my morals remained pure and untainted, yet almost without being conscious of it myself, I was in some measure under the dominion of the passion of love. It was at this period that Ariosto fell into my hands, though in what manner I cannot now recollect : I certainly did not purchase it, for at this period I did not possess a single farthing ; neither, I am persuaded, did I purloin it, the remembrance of a similar fault which I once committed being still fresh in my memory. I rather think I obtained it volume by volume from one of my schoolfellows, in exchange for half a chicken, which was usually given us every Sunday ; so that my first Ariosto must have cost me the sacrifice of a couple of chickens in four weeks. I am not, however, certain of this fact, at which I am extremely sorry, for I should wish to know whether the first time I drank at the fountain of Hippocrene it was at the expense of my stomach, and if I had sacrificed to the Muses the most delicate morsel then in my possession. It was not the only exchange which I made in this way, for I perfectly well recollect having never tasted these highly esteemed *dominical chickens* for six successive months, in order to barter them for little histories which were related to us by a certain parasite, who sharpened his wits in order to fill his belly. He admitted none to the number of his auditors but those who could pay him in eatables : but in whatever manner the acquisition was made, I possessed an Ariosto, which I read here and there without method, and without comprehending the

half of what I read. It may hence be judged how little attention had been given to our improvement, when I, the best scholar of the class, — I, who could translate into Italian prose Virgil's *Georgics*, which are more difficult than even the *Æneid* itself, — was unable to comprehend the most easy of our own poets. I shall never forget when perusing the song of Alcini, when I came to those charming passages in which her beauty is so well portrayed, I exerted in vain every effort to comprehend them. I found it impossible to seize the true meaning of the two last verses of this stanza : —

“ Non così strettamente edera preme.”

I consulted with my rival, but he was no wiser than myself, and we lost ourselves in a labyrinth of conjectures. These secret consultations were not, however, long suffered to continue.

The assistant, having observed a small book in our possession, which we concealed on his approach, at length discovered our hidden treasure, and ordered us to deliver up the other volumes, which he carried to the sub-prior; thus disconcerting us juvenile poets, and leaving us without a guide.

III.

DURING the two first years of my abode at the academy, I learned scarcely anything. My health began to decline; for we were only provided with a spare diet, the quality of which was not even good. Little attention was, besides, paid to us in other respects; and the hours allotted for rest were too few. I was the more sensibly hurt by this regimen, because it was in direct opposition to that I was accustomed to

in my mother's house. I did not increase in stature, and became so emaciated as to resemble a wax-taper. I was besides successively attacked by a variety of complaints, the most remarkable of which was an eruptive disease on my head and temples resembling a kind of leprosy, from which I suffered inconceivable distress.

My paternal uncle, the Chevalier Pellegrino Alfieri, was nominated governor of Coni, where he resided eight months in the year; so that I had no relatives at Turin, except the family of Tournon, from whom my mother was descended, and Count Benedict Alfieri, whom I was in the habit of terming uncle, though he was only a cousin of my father's. He was first architect to the king, and lived near the Theatre Royal, which he had designed and executed with equal skill and elegance. I sometimes went to dine at his house, and sometimes only to call, according to the caprice of Andrea, who exerted over me the most despotic sway, under pretence of having received letters from my uncle at Coni.

Count Benedict, who was really a worthy character, was extremely fond of me. He was passionately attached to his art, of an unambitious character, and almost totally unacquainted with everything unconnected with the fine arts. I could mention many proofs of his immoderate love for architecture. This passion led him even to speak to me, who was then a mere child, with the greatest enthusiasm, of the divine Michael Angelo Buonarotti, whose name he never pronounced without bowing his head, or taking off his hat, with a respect and devotion which can never be effaced from my memory. He had spent the greatest part of his life at Rome, and was an enthusiastic ad-

mirer of the antique. In consequence of this, however, he sometimes departed from true taste in the construction of his buildings, by endeavoring to conform to the modern style; a proof of which may be seen in the whimsical plan of the Church of Carignano, built in the form of a fan: but none of these defects are visible in the construction of the theatre already mentioned, in the king's riding-school, in the saloon of Stupinigi, and in the magnificent façade of the Temple of San Pietro. Perhaps the flight of his genius might, after all, be retarded by the insignificant remuneration which the King of Sardinia had it only in his power to bestow on him for his services. The noble plans which he left at his death, and which are in the possession of his majesty, afford a proof of the truth of this suggestion. Among these are various projects for the embellishment of Turin, and particularly a plan for rebuilding the decayed wall separating the Piazza del Castello from the Piazza Reale. This wall, on what account I know not, is termed the Pavilion.

I experience much gratification in speaking of this uncle, though it is now only that I am able fully to appreciate his abilities; for when I was at the academy, however sincerely I was attached to him, I frequently became weary of his society. Such is the whimsicality of the human mind and the influence of prejudice! What wearied me most was his wretched pronunciation of the Tuscan, which he had adopted during his stay at Rome, and which he never endeavored to correct, although the Italian is wholly unknown at Turin. Such, however, is the force of the sublime and beautiful, that those who at the first scoffed at my uncle's Tuscan, became in a little while so sensible of

its superiority over their own barbarous jargon, that on addressing him, they always imitated his mode of expression. This was more particularly the case with those nobles who were anxious that their houses should resemble palaces. Fruitless attempt! in which this excellent man, without any profit, and merely through friendship, lost the half of his time in giving pleasure to others,—a thing, as I have often heard him acknowledge, not only disagreeable to himself, but extremely injurious to his art.

IV.

As none of my relations took the smallest interest in my concerns, I spent the best years of my life in almost total idleness.

Constantly sick, and having my body covered with sores or ulcers, I became the constant sport of my companions, who bestowed on me the nickname of *Carcase*; while those among them who wished to appear still more witty added the epithet *rotten*.

From the state of my health and other circumstances, I fell into a profound melancholy; and my love of solitude daily acquired new strength. Nevertheless, I was admitted, during 1760, into the rhetorical class; for notwithstanding the numerous disadvantages under which I labored, I had contrived to dedicate a few moments to study; and very little knowledge was necessary in the candidate for this and similar distinctions. The professor of rhetoric was less intelligent than my last master; for though he explained to us the *Æneid*, and caused us to compose Latin verses, it seemed to me that, instead of acquiring more knowledge, I became daily less a proficient in the Latin tongue.

During the year I attended rhetoric, I happened to recover my little Ariosto, by picking it up volume by volume from the sub-prior, who had placed them on his shelves, among a great many others. I seized the opportunity of doing this, when the youths were admitted into his chamber to witness the ascent of a balloon from the windows which were in the front of the building, and from which we could enjoy a better view of this spectacle than from those of the gallery, which were in the side. I took care, as soon as I had taken a single volume, to press the books together, so as to fill up the chasm, and prevent its loss being observed. It was in this manner that during four successive days I was fortunate enough to recover my lost treasure; but, though enchanted with my success, I maintained a profound silence on the subject. Reflecting at present on this fact, I perfectly recollect that from the moment I recovered my Ariosto, I never again opened it. Several circumstances led to this neglect; for besides the bad state of my health, which was certainly the principal, *such a capital rhetorician was I*, that the difficulty of comprehending this poet had rather augmented than diminished. The constant interruption in the story of the piece had likewise a tendency to make me relinquish the study of Ariosto, as I knew not where to find the sequel, — a circumstance which even now displeases me, as being contrary to nature, and destructive of all poetic effect.

At the period of which I am speaking, I was unacquainted with the name even of Tasso, whose works would have been infinitely more conformable to my taste. There fell into my hands at this time, however, I recollect not in what manner, the *Æneid* of Annibal Caro, which I read more than once with the greatest

avidity, feeling warmly interested for Turnus and Camilla. I succeeded in concealing this work, in order to assist me in the translation of some exercises given us by the master, — a circumstance which greatly retarded my advancement in a knowledge of the Latin. I had then never perused any of the works of our other poets, except some operas of Metastasio, such as Cato, Artaxerxes, the Olympiad, etc., and a few others which chance had thrown into my hands, among the small collection which is performed during the carnival. They amused me very much till I reached the chorus, which interrupts the development of the passions at the precise point where I had begun to identify myself with the subject. This gave me greater pain and disgust than even the interruptions of Ariosto. Different comedies of Goldoni, which were lent me by the master, also afforded me much entertainment; but my dramatic genius, the germ of which perhaps existed in my mind, was gradually extinguished, through want of proper aliment, or encouragement of any kind. In short, my ignorance was as great as that of either my preceptors or fellow-students.

During the long and frequent intervals in which I was obliged from ill health to keep my chamber, one of the students, who, though somewhat older and much stronger, was yet more ignorant than myself, employed me occasionally in translating, extending, or composing verses for him. He compelled me to comply with his demands by this irresistible argument: "If you are willing to do my work, I will give you two balls to play with: here they are; you see they are large, of four colors, well made, of fine cloth, and extremely elastic; if you are not willing to do it, I will give you two *blows*," and he raised his athletic arm, which he

held over my head. I chose the two balls, and proceeded with his work. At first I faithfully executed my task in the best manner I was able; and the master evinced not a little surprise at the unexpected progress of his scholar, who had been hitherto considered as extremely dull and stupid. For my own part I religiously kept the secret, more from the natural taciturnity of my temper than from any dread of the threatened blows. Nevertheless, as I soon became tired of his balls, and disgusted with the fatigue, I began to pay less attention to the composition of these exercises, notwithstanding the praises bestowed on my talents, till at last I committed various solecisms, such as *potebam*, which at length drew on him the hisses of his comrades and the rod of the master. Though he found himself thus ridiculed in public, and forced to resume his *ass's skin*, he durst not openly vent his anger upon me; but he never afterwards employed me to execute his tasks. The disgrace with which he would have been loaded, had I discovered the secret, restrained the rage with which he was agitated. I never betrayed him; but I secretly laughed when others related that *potebam* and similar solecisms had found their way into his compositions, in which no one suspected I had the smallest share. I might probably be restrained within the limits of discretion, by the recollection of the hand which was held over my head, which I saw continually before my eyes, ready to take vengeance on me for so many balls expended to procure only ridicule. Hence I learned that mankind are only governed by mutual terror.

Having passed the year which ought to have been dedicated to the study of rhetoric, in these puerile and insipid occupations, sometimes sick, always indolent, I

was called to the customary examination, and judged qualified to enter on the study of philosophy. We went twice a day to the university, which was near the academy, in order to attend these classes. The morning was dedicated to geometry, and the afternoon to philosophy. Thus I commenced philosopher, before having completed my thirteenth year; and so proud was I of this appellation, that I already in imagination conceived myself in the highest class. I also reaped much amusement from going out of the house twice a day: besides, it often afforded me an opportunity of making an escape to the city, by leaving the school under some pretext or other.

Though I was the least of all the scholars who inhabited the second apartment, to which I had descended, it was this very inferiority in point of age, stature, and strength, which gave me greater courage, and induced me to distinguish myself. In short, I studied at first with so much assiduity as to enable me to make a figure in the examinations, which took place every evening in the academy. I usually replied to the questions as well, or perhaps better than any of the others; but this was only a simple act of memory, since, to confess the truth, I did not comprehend this pedantic philosophy, which is not only extremely insipid, but from being enveloped in Latin, it was necessary always to dispute with the dictionary in our hands. As to geometry, a course of which I went through, consisting of the first six books of Euclid, I was never able to understand the fourth proposition; and I do not even at present comprehend it, having always possessed an antigeometrical head.

The peripatetic philosophy, which we attended after dinner, usually acted as an opiate. During the first

half-hour we wrote what the professor dictated; and he afterwards explained it in Latin—God knows how!—in the three quarters of an hour we remained. All the students, enveloped in their large cloaks, slept most profoundly. Among these philosophers, no other noise was heard, save the languid voice of the professor, and the high, low, and middle tones of the snorers, which formed the finest concert imaginable. Besides the irresistible power of this soporific philosophy, what still contributed to subject us of the academy to the influence of sleep was our rest being interrupted in the morning, owing to the early hour at which we were obliged to rise. As to myself, the short period I was allowed for sleep deranged the functions of my stomach. This circumstance became so evident to the superiors, that they indulged me in sleeping till seven o'clock, instead of forcing me to rise at a quarter before six, when the students assembled to hear prayers, previous to entering on their duties at half past seven.

V.

IN the winter of the year 1762, my uncle, the Governor of Coni, returned for a few months to Turin; and, having observed the bad state of my health, obtained for me some indulgences in the quantity and quality of my diet. This, in conjunction with the relaxation I enjoyed from attending the university, from the daily visits I made to my uncle during the holidays, and from the sweet periodical slumber of three quarters of an hour, which I enjoyed in the philosophical class, all tended in some measure to increase my growth, and restore me to my wonted health.

About this period my uncle, in quality of our guardian,

removed my sister Julia from the convent of St. Anastasia at Asti to that of S. Croce at Turin. She had remained six years in the former, under the care of one of our aunts, the widow of the Marquis of Trotti, who had retired thither some time before. Julia had been even worse educated than myself. This proceeded from the absolute sway she had acquired over our worthy aunt. This blind attachment, instead of being advantageous, proved more injurious to her every succeeding day. Julia, who was my senior by two years, now approached her fifteenth year. In Italy this is not a tranquil age: the dawning of passion then begins to sway the tender and inexperienced heart of youth. An attachment she had formed in the convent displeased my uncle, though the object of it was in every respect her equal; and it was this circumstance which determined him to remove her to Turin, in order to place her under the care of a maternal aunt, a sister of the community of S. Croce. The sight of this sister, whom I had once so tenderly loved, and who was now much improved, afforded me the greatest pleasure, and restored me to health and spirits. I was the more delighted with the possibility of sometimes seeing her, as I conceived that my presence in a great degree tended to assuage the sorrows of her heart. Though separated from her lover, she persisted in saying that she would one day espouse him.

I had obtained permission from Andrea to visit the convent almost every Saturday and Sunday, which were our weekly holidays. Often did I spend the time of my visit, which lasted for an hour or more, in weeping with this dear girl at the grate. These tears were to me a great relief; and I always left the convent more tranquil, though not more gay, than when I entered it. In

my quality of philosopher, I endeavored to inspire her with fortitude, and encouraged her to persist in her resolution, assuring her that she would eventually overcome my uncle's obstinacy. But time, whose influence is so powerful on the firmest hearts, was not long in exerting its sway over her mind. Absence, obstacles, dissipation, and, above all, the superior opportunities of improvement which she now enjoyed, consoled her, and in a few months wholly obliterated her love.

During the holidays of the present year, I went for the first time to the theatre of Carignan, to witness the performance of the opera buffa. This indulgence was procured for me by my uncle the architect, at whose house I slept, on returning from the theatre, as at that late hour it was impossible to gain admittance to the academy without infringing the rules by which every pupil was obliged to return at half an hour after sunset. During the carnival we were permitted once a week to go in a body to the king's theatre; but my indulgent uncle, on the present occasion, solicited our superior to suffer me to accompany him to his country-house, where he proposed to remain for a day and a night. By this subterfuge I had the pleasure of hearing the opera buffa of *Mercato di Malmantile*. It was composed by a celebrated master, and performed by the first singers in Italy, Carratoli Baglioni and her daughters. This varied and enchanting music sunk deep into my soul, and made the most astonishing impression on my imagination; it agitated the inmost recesses of my heart to such a degree that for several weeks I experienced the most profound melancholy, which was not, however, wholly unattended with pleasure. I became tired and disgusted with my studies, while at the same time the most wild and whimsical ideas took such possession

of my mind, as would have led me to portray them in the most impassioned verses, had I not been wholly unacquainted with the true nature of my own feelings. It was the first time music had produced such a powerful effect on my mind. I had never experienced anything similar, and it long remained engraven on my memory. When I recollect the feelings excited by the representation of the grand operas, at which I was present during several carnivals, and compare them with those which I now experience, on returning from the performance of a piece I have not witnessed for some time, I am fully convinced that nothing acts so powerfully on my mind as all species of music, and particularly the sound of female voices, and of contralto. Nothing excites more various or terrific sensations in my mind. Thus the plots of the greatest number of my tragedies were either formed while listening to music, or a few hours afterwards.

The first year of my attendance at the university having now elapsed, my uncle of Coni was informed by the professors, it is evident with how much justice, that I had studied with great assiduity; on which account he invited me to pass twelve days with him in that city. This short journey between Turin and Coni, through the fertile and smiling plains of Piedmont, was the second I had ever made in my life. It afforded me much amusement, and proved extremely beneficial to my health. Exercise and pure air were always reviving and salutary to me. The pleasure of this excursion was, however, in some measure destroyed, by my performing it with hack horses, which travelled at a snail's pace. It was more particularly irksome to me, who had, four or five years before, posted with the rapidity of lightning, between Asti and Turin. It

seemed to me as if I had become feeble as I advanced in age; and I almost conceived myself dishonored by the slow rate at which we proceeded. On entering Carignan, Raconis, Savillan, and even the smallest villages in our way, I shrunk back in my wretched vehicle, closing my eyes in order to avoid seeing or being seen by the inhabitants. It seemed to me as if every one knew how I had formerly travelled, and laughed at the present humiliating reverse. Did these feelings originate in a noble and ardent soul, or proceed from a weak and haughty mind? I find myself incompetent to reply to this question: others will be able to judge from the history of the succeeding years of my life. Of one thing, however, I am certain, — that, had I fallen under the care of a man intimately acquainted with the human heart, my character might have been moulded into any form he pleased, by the judicious application of the love of praise and of glory, which from my earliest infancy had such a powerful influence over my mind.

During my short stay at Coni I composed my first sonnet, which I durst not, however, acknowledge, as it consisted only of a few indifferent verses, the most of which were borrowed from Metastasio and Ariosto, the only poets I had then read. I believe they were also defective in rhyme and measure; for though I had composed hexameter and pentameter Latin verses, I had never been taught any rules for the composition of Italian poetry. I have racked my brain to remember two or three of these stanzas, but in vain. I only recollect that they were in praise of a lady of whom my uncle was enamored, and who was, besides, rather a favorite with myself. This sonnet was undoubtedly execrable: nevertheless it was much admired, not only by the

lady herself, but by others who were equally incompetent to decide on its merits; yet, in consequence of such praises, I conceived myself already a poet. My uncle, however, like a true soldier, was rigid in his manners, and, though well versed in history and politics, was yet unacquainted with poetry, for which he had no relish. Hence he took every opportunity to repress the efforts of my infant muse, which so chilled my poetic enthusiasm that I relinquished every idea of writing verses till the age of twenty-five. How many sonnets, good or bad, did not my uncle stifle along with this first production of my pen!

In the following year the study of physics and ethics succeeded to that of our tiresome philosophy: we attended the former in the morning, and the latter in the afternoon. The study of physics was not wholly destitute of attractions to me, but the constant use of the Latin language, and my total ignorance of geometry, a course of which I had gone through, proved invincible obstacles to my advancement. A love of truth obliges me to confess, though to my eternal disgrace, that after attending a course of lectures on physics by the celebrated Beccaria, I did not remember a single definition, neither did I reap greater benefit from his learned course of electricity, which he has enriched with so many important discoveries. It happened now as it did when I attended the geometrical class, — by a simple effort of memory I always succeeded in answering the questions which were put to me, and generally received more praise than blame from the masters.

My uncle, to whom I had been represented as extremely industrious, proposed in the winter of 1763 to recompense me by a small present, a thing which he

had never before even hinted at. My domestic Andrea announced this to me some months before with an air of importance, and this undefined hope, which my imagination embellished, gave a fresh stimulus to my mind, and rendered me more eager, parrot-like, to acquire my lesson by rote.

At length my uncle's valet one day showed me this famous present, which consisted of a silver sword of curious workmanship. Fond of this bawble, and conceiving it only as the just reward of my industry, I daily expected, but in vain, that it would be given to me. The propriety of requesting it from my uncle was suggested to me, but the same unbending disposition, which a few years before prevented me from making known my wishes to my maternal aunt, though urged by her to do so, kept me silent in the present instance; and as there were no other means to obtain this sword, it never came into my possession.

VI.

IN this manner passed the year of my attendance on the class of physics. In the summer my uncle was appointed Viceroy of Sardinia, and when about to set out in the month of September, he recommended me to the care of the few relatives I had still left at Turin. He renounced the management of my pecuniary concerns, and nominated one of his friends joint guardian with himself. From this period I was less restricted in my expenses. My new guardian allowed me a monthly sum, — an arrangement to which my uncle had always objected, — and which even now appears to me to have been extremely unreasonable. Perhaps he was influenced in this respect by Andrea, who must have

been a great gainer by disbursing every shilling which was expended ; it, besides, kept me in a state of greater dependence on him.

Towards the end of the year 1762 I commenced the study of civil and canonical law ; a course which, at the termination of four years, conducts the student to the highest academical honor, — a doctor's degree.

After a few weeks' attendance on these classes, I experienced a return of the eruptive malady under which I suffered so much two years before, and which was now more virulent than ever. My poor head could not retain the definitions, the digests, and all the apparatus of these two species of law. I cannot better describe the state of my head than by comparing it to a soil, which, burnt up by the scorching heat of the sun, cracks in every direction, forming fissures that remain open till returning showers again close them.

Of so inveterate a nature were these sores, that I could not, as formerly, avoid yielding up my hair a sacrifice to the scissors. Of all the misfortunes I ever experienced, this to me proved the most vexatious, not only from the necessity of having my head shaved, but of wearing a peruke, on which account I became the sport and derision of my comrades. I attempted at first to save my peruke from their attacks, but finding this was impossible, and that I even risked my own safety, I suddenly changed my tactics, and seizing the unlucky peruke before any one had affronted me, I flung it up in the air, and made it the butt of my own sport.

In fact, a few days after, the public clamor having subsided, I restored the peruke to its proper station, and was less persecuted, I may almost say more respected, than the two or three others who were in the same chamber. Hence I learned that it is sometimes

necessary to relinquish voluntarily what we cannot prevent others taking away from us.

In the course of this year I took lessons in geography, and on the harpsichord. Frequently amusing myself with globes and charts, I made some progress in the former of these studies, to which I joined that of history, and especially ancient history. My geographical master being a native of the Valley of Aosta, occasionally lent me some French works, which I began to comprehend a little, and among others *Gil Blas*, with which I was perfectly enchanted. This was the first book I had ever read from beginning to end, except the *Æneid* of Caro, and it afforded me much greater entertainment. About this period I likewise perused several romances, such as *Cassandra*, *Almachilda*, etc., and the interest with which they inspired me was in proportion to the horrific and melancholy nature of the story. Among other productions of this kind, I read the *Memoirs of a Man of Quality* six times at least.

Though an enthusiastic admirer of music, and though I even evinced some taste for this art, I made no progress upon the harpsichord, except being able to pass my fingers more lightly over the keys. I could never acquire a knowledge of the written characters; ear and memory were everything with me. One reason, I believe, why I made such slow progress in the acquirement of this science, was taking these lessons immediately after dinner. I have observed, throughout the whole course of my life, that this is a most unfavorable period for the exertion of intellect, and even for the simple application of the eyes on paper, or any other object whatever. The notes trembled before my eyes, and after an hour's lesson I usually quitted the instrument without being able to distin-

guish objects: I continued ill and stupid during the remainder of the day.

I made as little progress in the arts of fencing and dancing. From the natural weakness of my frame, I was never able to preserve my guard, or remain in the other attitudes of this art. Besides my fencing-master attended me after dinner, and I frequently left the harpsichord to take up the sword.

To the natural hatred I had to dancing was joined an invincible antipathy towards my master,—a Frenchman newly arrived from Paris. He possessed a certain air of polite assurance, which, joined to his ridiculous motions and absurd discourse, greatly increased the innate aversion I felt towards this frivolous art. So unconquerable was this aversion, that after leaving school I could never be prevailed on to join in any dance whatever. The very name of this amusement makes me shudder and laugh at the same time,—a circumstance which is by no means unusual with me. I attribute, in a great measure, to this dancing-master the unfavorable and perhaps erroneous opinion I have formed of the French people, who, nevertheless, it must be confessed, possess many agreeable and estimable qualities: but it is difficult to weaken or efface impressions received in early youth. Reason lessens their influence as we advance in life; yet it is necessary to watch over ourselves, in order to judge without passion, and we are frequently so unfortunate as not to succeed. Two other causes also contributed to render me from my infancy disgusted with the French character. The first was the impression made on my mind by the sight of those ladies who accompanied the Duchess of Parma in her journey to Asti, and who were all bedaubed with rouge, the use of which was

then exclusively confined to the French. I have frequently mentioned this circumstance several years afterwards, not being able to account for such an absurd and ridiculous practice, which is wholly at variance with nature ; for when either sick, intoxicated, or from any other cause, human beings besmear themselves with this detestable rouge, they carefully conceal it, well knowing that when discovered it only excites the laughter or pity of the beholders. These painted French figures left a deep and lasting impression on my mind, and inspired me with a certain feeling of disgust towards the females of this nation.

From my geographical studies resulted another cause of antipathy to that nation. Having seen on the chart the great difference in extent and population between England or Prussia and France, and hearing every time news arrived from the armies that the French had been beaten by sea and land ; recalling to mind the first ideas of my infancy, during which I was told that the French had frequently been in possession of Asti, and that during the last time they had suffered themselves to be taken prisoners to the number of six or seven thousand, without resistance, after conducting themselves while they remained in possession of the place with the greatest insolence and tyranny ; all these different circumstances, being associated with the idea of the ridiculous dancing-master, tended more and more to rivet in my mind an aversion to the French nation. If mankind were like me inclined to search in themselves at an advanced period of life for the origin of their hatred or affection, either towards individuals or nations, they would perhaps find the first and insensible germs of such sentiments neither less absurd nor very different from those with which I was actuated. O, how insignificant a being is man !

VII.

MY uncle only survived his appointment to the Viceroyalty of Sardinia six months; he had scarcely attained the sixtieth year of his age, but his health had long been in a declining state. Before his departure he frequently said to me that he would never return. I had never felt much affection towards him, which was not surprising, as I seldom saw him, and he had besides always treated me with a certain degree of severity, without, however, being tyrannical or unjust. Estimable by his probity and his courage, he had served his country with distinction: bold and energetic in his character, he possessed all the qualities of an excellent commander. He enjoyed the reputation of great intelligence; but this knowledge was buried under a mass of ill-arranged erudition, and accompanied with a perpetual anxiety concerning everything relating to ancient and modern history. I experienced not, therefore, much affliction at his death, which I did not witness, and which all his friends had already predicted. By this event I was permitted to enjoy the large property of my father, augmented with the extensive fortune left me by my uncle.

According to the Piedmontese laws, the period of the guardianship of minors expires on their attaining the age of fourteen; another guardian is, however, appointed, who, without having any control over their annual income, can legally prevent the alienation of their property. Having thus become master of my fortune at the age of fourteen, I acquired additional importance in my own eyes, and immediately began to build castles in the air.

At this period my domestic-governor Andrea was very properly dismissed by order of my new guardian, as he had delivered himself up, without restraint, to idleness, intoxication, and every species of libertinism; he behaved to me with the greatest insolence, maltreating me without ceasing: when intoxicated, which frequently happened four or five times a week, he even went so far as to beat me.

During my frequent illnesses it was no unusual thing with him to leave me shut up in my chamber from dinner till the hour of supper. This practice tended, more than anything else, to retard the re-establishment of my health, and to increase that strong constitutional melancholy to which I was subject from my birth. Yet who would believe that I mourned during several weeks for the loss of this same tyrant? As he was not permitted to enter the academy, I went for several months to visit him every Monday and Wednesday. I caused my new valet, who was a little awkward, but of a gay and gentle character, to conduct me to his house. I gave to Andrea during these visits all the money I possessed, which was indeed not much. He at length found another master, and time, as much as the change of situation, in a short time banished him from my memory. If I was inclined to exhibit myself in a flattering point of view, I might represent the unreasonable attachment which I felt towards this unworthy domestic, as proceeding from a certain generosity of character; but nothing could be farther from the truth. This, however, did not prevent the reading of Plutarch from exciting in my mind a love of glory and virtue, nor my feeling and appreciating the pleasure and satisfaction of rendering good for evil, as often as I practised it. My attachment to Andrea who had

caused me so many uneasy hours proceeded partly from the habit of associating with him for seven years, and partly from a predilection which I felt for some of his good qualities. He always readily comprehended what was said to him, and executed any order with the greatest accuracy and despatch. The tales with which he amused me were full of wit and interest, and I generally accommodated matters with him as soon as the anger which his insolence and bad conduct excited had passed over. I cannot, at present, comprehend how I became accustomed to the yoke of this man; I, who always detested open force or any kind of ill-treatment. This reflection has since frequently led me to pity those princes, who, without being perfectly imbecile, suffer themselves to be governed by people who have acquired an ascendancy over them during the period of adolescence, — fatal age! during which the impressions we receive are indelible.

The first advantage which I reaped from the death of my uncle was being able to attend the riding-school, which I had hitherto been prohibited doing. The Prior of the academy, observing my great anxiety to be instructed in the art of riding, endeavored to turn it to my advantage, by making it the reward of my studies; he promised to indulge me in this respect if I would take the degree of Master of Arts at the university. To obtain this it was only necessary to undergo a public examination in logic, physics, and geometry, which was always conducted with great negligence. I instantly acceded to this proposal, and, having engaged a master who could at least assist me in recollecting the definitions in these sciences, which I had studied so superficially, I succeeded in fifteen or twenty days in making myself master of a dozen Latin sentences,

which were all that was necessary in order to reply to the few questions which the examiners would put to me. Thus then I became, I know not how, in less than a month Master of Arts; and was immediately permitted to take my first lesson in riding, — an art in which I became extremely expert in a few years. I was then below the middle size, and very meagre; my knees, which are the pivots of equitation, were extremely weak; but my passion for this exercise, and the determination of my will, supplied the place of strength. In a short time my progress was extremely rapid, particularly in the management of the horse. To this agreeable and noble exercise I owed the return of my health, the increase of my growth, and a certain vigor of constitution, which was soon visible to every eye.

I thus entered on a new mode of life. Being master of my fortune by the death of my uncle, dignified with the title of Master of Arts, delivered from the tyranny of Andrea, and mounted upon a noble courser, it is scarcely possible to conceive how much more commanding my countenance daily became. I frankly informed the prior and my new guardian that I was disgusted with the study of the law, that my time was wholly lost, and that, in short, I was determined to relinquish it. After an interview with each other, these gentlemen determined to remove me to the first apartment, where the pupils were subject to no constraint, as I have before mentioned.

On the 8th of May, 1763, I entered my new abode, where I remained nearly alone during the whole of the summer, but in autumn a vast number of foreigners arrived from every country; the majority of them were, however, British. An abundant table, continual amuse-

ment, plenty of sleep, daily exercise on horseback, and particularly the power of indulging all my whims, had, with renovated health, rendered me daring and vivacious. My hair was grown, and, having thrown aside my peruke, I dressed in the highest style of fashion. My clothes were extremely expensive, in order to compensate me for the black which the regulations of the academy had compelled me to wear during the five years I inhabited the third and second apartments. My guardian censured my expensive profusion in dress; but my tailor, who knew that I was able to pay, gave me credit, and I believe enriched himself at my expense. No sooner had I become my own master, and the possessor of an ample fortune, than I was surrounded by friends, companions, parasites, and, in short, by everything that follows in the train of prosperity and departs on the approach of adversity. In the midst of this career, equally novel and impetuous, I neither became so unreasonable nor insignificant as might have been supposed. I often thought of returning to study: I experienced remorse and a kind of shame for my ignorance, which I could neither conceal from myself nor wished to conceal from others; but having no solid basis of instruction, nor any one to direct my studies, and being besides almost ignorant of any language, I neither knew how to turn nor where to direct my application.

The reading of French romances, the constant society of foreigners, the want of opportunity of speaking or hearing the Italian, had insensibly made me lose the little Tuscan I had acquired during my attendance on the Latin and rhetorical classes. The French was so familiar to me that during a fit of study, which lasted two or three months of the first year I inhabited this

apartment, I commenced the perusal of the thirty-six volumes of *l'Histoire Ecclésiastique de Fleuri*, which I read nearly through with the greatest avidity; I even made extracts from it in French, and proceeded so far as the eighteenth book. However foolish, ridiculous, and unprofitable this study may appear, I nevertheless applied myself to it with the greatest perseverance, and even some degree of pleasure. From the perusal of this work I formed the most unfavorable opinion of priests and their concerns; but on throwing it aside I thought no more on the subject. I laughed very heartily on reperusing these extracts twenty years afterwards. On relinquishing the reading of ecclesiastical history, I once more returned to that of romances; many of which, and among others the *Arabian Night's Tales*, I perused several times over.

Having contracted a friendship with many youths nearly of my own age, who resided in the city with their governors, we frequently hired wretched hacks, and made excursions into the country, during which we were oftener than once in danger of breaking our necks. Not unfrequently did we gallop down from the *Hermitage des Camaldules* to Turin, the road between which is paved and full of flint stones, — an enterprise which no consideration would afterwards have tempted me to undertake, even with the best horses. We have frequently pursued, at full gallop, my valet on his *Rosinante*, instead of a stag, in the wood between the *Po* and the *Doria*. Often, having taken the bridle from his horse, did we follow him at full speed, hallooing, and whipping up our horses, imitating the sounds of the French horn, leaping over ditches, and fording the *Doria* at its confluence with the *Po*; in short, we committed so many foolish pranks that at length no one

would lend us his horses at any price. By means of such exercises, however, both my corporeal and mental powers were strengthened and invigorated, and my mind prepared to merit and assert the physical and moral liberty I had acquired.

VIII.

AT this period no one took any concern in my affairs except my new valet, whom my guardian had placed over me, and who had orders to accompany me wherever I went. But to tell the truth, as he was ignorant and somewhat avaricious, I found little difficulty in bending him to my purpose, and insuring his silence by means of gold. Naturally of a discontented and restless disposition, I very soon became impatient at being always followed by this domestic. This restraint appeared to me much more painful as I was the only one in the first apartment subject to anything of a similar kind; they all went out and returned as often and at whatever hour they pleased. The reason alleged for it was, my being much younger than any of the others, for I had not yet attained my fifteenth year. I obstinately persisted, however, in going out like the rest, without informing my valet or any other person. At first I was reprimanded by the governor; but this did not prevent me from continuing the same practice. The second time I was locked in my chamber; but no sooner were the doors opened, than I sallied forth as before. This led to a more strict confinement, which was again disregarded: and this fluctuation between liberty and restraint lasted for more than a month; the punishment was daily augmented, but always without producing the desired effect. I at last declared that it might as

well be continued without interruption, for that I was determined to use my liberty as formerly, and that I insisted on being treated in every case like the rest of my companions; that this distinction was odious and unjust, and rendered me the sport of my comrades; that if the governor thought I was neither sufficiently old nor reasonable to associate with those of the first apartment, he could remand me back to the second. This arrogant discourse was punished by a confinement which lasted above three months, and particularly during the carnival of 1764. I obstinately refused to solicit my liberty; and thus enraged, and persevering, I believe I would sooner have perished than made any concessions.

I slept during the greatest part of the day, and in the evening when I rose out of bed, I caused to be placed by the fire a mattress, on which I threw myself. I would not partake of the usual dinner of the academy, which was sent to my chamber, but cooked on my own fire *polenta*, and similar dishes. I totally neglected my external appearance, and acquired the air of a complete savage.

Although I was prohibited from leaving my chamber, my friends were permitted to see me, and among others I was visited by the trusty companions of my heroic sports; I was, however, sullen and silent, like a body without a soul, squatted on my mattress. I did not even reply to any questions which were put to me, but remained whole hours with my eyes fixed on the floor, and filled with tears, not one of which, however, I suffered to escape.

IX.

THE nuptials of my sister with Count Hyacinth Cumiana proved a new era in my existence. The marriage was solemnized on the 1st of May, 1764, — a day which will forever remain engraven on my memory. I accompanied the bridal party to the count's beautiful country-seat, Cumiana, which was only about ten miles distant from Turin. I spent a month with them, during which the time glided rapidly away, as may be readily conceived by any one who recalls to mind that I had lately emerged from the prison in which I had been confined during the winter. I had obtained my liberty at the solicitation of my brother-in-law, and the restoration to the rights of those who occupied the first apartment in the academy. Thus, after several months' rigorous confinement, I was raised to a level with my fellow-students; at the same time I was less controlled in my expenditure, — a right which could be no longer legally withheld from me. Immediately on my emancipation I purchased for myself a horse, which I took to Cumiana. He was a very beautiful animal, and extremely handsome in his whole form; but especially in his head, neck, and chest: I was extremely fond of this animal; even now I never think of him without experiencing the most lively emotions. My attachment was so excessive that when he labored under the slightest malady, which not unfrequently happened, because though fiery he was yet of a delicate constitution, sleep and appetite both forsook me. My fondness, however, when mounted on him, did not prevent me from teasing and tormenting him, according as the whim and caprice of the moment exerted their influence on my mind.

The delicacy of his frame furnished me with a pretext for keeping another saddle-horse. Not contented with these, I soon set up a carriage; this required two other horses, which, with one for a cabriolet and two for the saddle, made up a stud of seven, all of which I had procured in the short space of one year.

My parsimonious guardian exclaimed at my prodigality, but it was to no purpose. I adopted other means of expenditure, and particularly that of fine clothes. There were some of my English comrades who expended their money very profusely: not wishing to be surpassed in this respect, I even exceeded them in extravagance. But on the other hand, I lived with many young men who belonged not to the academy in terms of greater intimacy than with the academists themselves. These, being dependent on their parents, could not emulate my profusion; for though many of them were descended from the first families in Turin, they were yet restricted in their pocket expenses. Truth, however, requires me to avow that, with regard to these young men, I then practised a virtue which in the sequel I found extremely useful, and from which I have never deviated. It consisted in never wishing to surpass any of my acquaintances who regarded themselves as my inferiors, whether in point of physical strength, wit, generosity, or dignity of character. In fact, as often as I was obliged to assume any new and magnificent habit, whether to appear at court, or to dine with my academical associates, who rivalled me in such follies, I immediately threw it off after dinner when any of my other friends came to visit me; I uniformly put it aside in order that they might not see it, for it seemed in my eyes a crime to have such a dress, and still even

a greater to display things which my friends and equals possessed not. Thus, though I had obtained, after much strife with my guardian, a very elegant chariot, — a vehicle of no use whatever to a boy of sixteen years of age in a city such as Turin, — I yet never entered it, because none of my acquaintances possessed one, but were obliged to walk on foot. I ran no risk of being envied for my saddle-horses, since they were at liberty to use them in common with myself, though each had his own maintained at the expense of their parents. This luxury was to me the most agreeable of any other, since it gave me no invidious superiority over the rest of my associates.

Whoever impartially examines this sketch will be able, I conceive, notwithstanding the errors incident to youth, and the faults originating from a love of indolence and a bad system of education, to discover in it traces of a love of justice, uninfluenced by prejudices of birth or fortune, and a greatness of mind, — features which constitute the essential characteristics of a free man, or of one deserving to be so.

X.

HAVING gone to spend a month in the country with two brothers, who were my particular friends and associates in my riding excursions, I for the first time felt, in the most unequivocal manner, the influence of the tender passion. I became smitten with their sister-in-law, the wife of their elder brother, a young, vivacious, and enchanting brunette. In consequence of this attachment I fell into a profound melancholy, became restless whether in her presence or when absent from her, and so embarrassed as to prevent me uttering a

single syllable, if I casually met her at a little distance from her brothers-in-law, who never quitted her. After our return from the country, I spent whole days in the public walks and in going from one street to another, that I might have the pleasure of beholding her. What superadded to my sufferings was the impossibility of speaking of her, or of ever hearing her name even pronounced. In fine, I became a victim to all the feelings which Petrarch has so inimitably depicted in some of his pieces; feelings which few can comprehend, and which fewer still ever experience. This first attachment, which never produced any serious consequences, is not even now wholly extinguished in my mind. During my unceasing travels for a succession of years it has uniformly continued, without any act of volition or almost perception on my part, to haunt my imagination and to pursue my steps. It seemed like a voice crying from the inmost recesses of my heart, "If thou provest thyself worthy thou mayest render thyself acceptable in the sight of this female; and should circumstances change, thou mayest yet embody what has hitherto been only a shadow."

During the autumn of 1765 I undertook, in company with my guardian, a journey to Genoa: it was the first I had ever made. The view of the sea excited my wonder and admiration, and I was never tired with contemplating it. The picturesque and magnificent situation of this superb city also served to enchant my senses. Had I been capable of transfusing my ideas into poetic language, I should most certainly have written verses; but during the two last years I had scarcely ever opened a book, except a few French romances and some of the prose works of Voltaire, which last I never perused but with pleasure.

In my way to Genoa I experienced the inexpressible satisfaction of visiting my mother and my natal city. I had not seen these objects, so dear to me, for seven years, which at my age seemed so many centuries. On returning from Genoa I conceived that I had performed a great exploit and been a great traveller; but though I regarded myself, in consequence of this journey, as far superior to many of my academical friends, whom, however, I did not attempt to mortify by displaying my pride on the occasion, I yet felt myself humbled at the recollection of my inferiority in that respect to the students from remote countries, such as England, Germany, Poland, and Prussia, who considered my journey as a mere trifle. Hence I was seized with a mania of seeing foreign parts, and in particular of visiting their countries.

The last eighteen months that I remained in the first apartment flew rapidly away in idleness and continual dissipation. On my entrance into it I had inscribed my name in the list of those who wish to be employed in the army; and three years afterwards, in the month of May, 1766, I was included in a promotion of about one hundred and fifty youths. For several months I had become disinclined to a military life, but, not having withdrawn my name, I was forced to accept an ensign's commission in the provincial regiment of Asti. I had originally requested an appointment in the cavalry, on account of the passion I had for horses; but I afterwards changed the object of my solicitation, and was permitted to enter one of these provincial regiments, which, in time of peace, are only called out twice a year for a few days. I remained then at perfect liberty to do nothing, the only state which was really irksome to me. My entrance into

the militia obliged me, however, to quit the academy, where I resided voluntarily and with pleasure to myself now that I was freed from every species of restraint ; but leave it I must, and in the course of May I took my departure, after having been a resident in it for eight years. In the month of September I repaired for the first time to a review of my regiment at Asti, where I fulfilled with the greatest punctuality all the duties of my station, which I nevertheless detested. I could never accustom my mind to yield to that gradual chain of dependence termed subordination, which is the soul of military discipline, but which could never enter into the head of the future tragic poet.

On leaving the academy I took possession of a small but handsome apartment in the house of my sister. I amused myself in squandering away my money among my betters, in the purchase of horses, in superfluities of every kind, and in giving entertainments to my friends and my fellow-students of the academy. A rage for travelling, which I had imbibed from my frequent intercourse with foreigners, induced me, contrary to my character, to devise a little stratagem in order to obtain permission to visit Rome and Naples for at least a year. I prevailed on an English preceptor, a Catholic, who had accompanied in their travels to Italy a Flemish and Dutch youth, with whom I passed more than a year at the academy, to take charge of me. I acted so as to render even these young people themselves anxious to have me for their travelling companion. I induced my brother-in-law to obtain permission from the king for me to depart under the direction of this English tutor, a man who was pretty far advanced in life, and possessed an ex-

cellent character. This was the first plot in which I had ever engaged, and I had little to reproach myself with. Some art was necessary to persuade the tutor, my brother-in-law, and especially my avaricious guardian, to accede to my views; but though I succeeded, I was ashamed and indignant at the flattery and dissimulation which I had been forced to employ in order to accomplish my purpose.

His majesty, who interfered in the most trifling affairs, was hostile to any of the nobles leaving the kingdom, especially a youth who had given early indications of possessing rather a singular character. It was therefore necessary that I should bend myself very low; but happily this did not prevent me from afterwards assuming my former height.

In thus concluding the second epoch of my life I am fully aware that it is composed of still more insipid minutiae than even the first. I advise my readers not to dwell on it too long, and to bear in mind that these eight years of my adolescence comprise a period of sickness, idleness, and ignorance.





THIRD EPOCH.

YOUTH.

COMPREHENDING ABOUT TEN YEARS OF TRAVELLING AND IRREGULARITIES.

I.

IN the morning of the 4th of October, 1766, after passing a sleepless night, occupied with the most foolish ideas, I set out with inexpressible delight on this so-much-wished-for journey.

I travelled in the same carriage with my three companions, our domestics followed in a coach, and we were preceded by my valet as courier. This was not the old man who acted in quality of my governor for nearly three years, but a domestic of my late uncle's, and who at his death had entered into my service: he was called Francis Elias. He had twice accompanied my uncle to Sardinia, and had attended him in his travels through France, England, and Holland. He possessed a mind of great acuteness, joined to uncommon activity, and was of more use than all the other four domestics put together. He must henceforth be considered as chief director of my travels, since I found him on this occasion our only sure guide; the

others, masters and servants, possessing all the incapacity of infants, or of old men reduced to a state of second childhood.

We remained fifteen days at Milan. I had lived at Turin, the situation of which is so beautiful; I had seen Genoa two years before, it was therefore impossible I could be much pleased with Milan. The few things worthy of observation I did not see, or at least viewed them in a hasty and imperfect manner, being utterly ignorant of every useful and agreeable art.

I recollect among other things that on visiting the Ambrosian Library, the librarian presented me with an autograph manuscript of Petrarch, which I, like a true savage, returned to him with the greatest indifference. I entertained a species of hatred against this divine poet, because during the time I attended philosophy, his works having fallen into my hands, I had opened them here and there, and had read or rather spelt a few verses without comprehending them. Imbibing the opinion of the French and of others equally arrogant and presumptuous, I repeated after them that Petrarch was nothing more than a *frivolous witling*.

Besides, the only books I had provided myself with for this twelve months' journey were some travels in Italy, which were mostly written in French, and I thus proceeded to the summit of barbarism, towards which I had already made so many hasty strides. I conversed with my travelling companions wholly in French; and in all the Milanese houses to which we had introductions this was the only language spoken; so that when I wished to arrange any ideas in my poor little head they were always clothed in French. The few letters I wrote were written in French, the little ridiculous journal of my travels was likewise written in this lan-

guage; yet all this was nothing. I only knew this language by rote, and if I had ever been taught any rules, I had perfectly forgotten them. I knew still less of Italian; such are the misfortunes which result from being born in an *amphibious* country, and from the erroneous education I had received.

We departed from Milan after a stay of nearly fifteen days. I shall not here repeat what I had written in the journal already mentioned; I committed it to the flames. Neither shall I enter into the details of the journey of an uninformed boy through countries so well known; nor attempt to describe all the cities which I visited in the true style of a Vandal. I will speak only of myself, since I am the unfortunate subject of this work.

We arrived in a few days at Bologna, by the way of Placenza, Parma, and Modena. We stopped only a single day at Parma, and but a few hours at Modena, taking as usual only a cursory and imperfect view of the objects pointed out to us as worthy of notice.

The greatest pleasure I experienced in this journey, and indeed the only one of which I was susceptible, was the travelling post on the great roads. I neither found the porticos nor the pictures of Bologna to my taste; I was no connoisseur. Restless and inquiet, I teased without ceasing our preceptor to proceed. About the end of October we reached Florence. This was the first city since our departure from Turin, the situation of which pleased me, though I did not admire it so much as Genoa, which I had visited two years before. We remained there a month. During our stay I visited in my usual manner those places pointed out by fame to the attention of travellers; such as the palace of Pitti, the gallery, and different churches. All

this inspired me with disgust. I possessed no taste for the fine arts, and especially painting; my eyes were insensible to the beauty of this divine art. If I possessed a taste for anything it was sculpture, and still more for architecture; perhaps from being associated with the memory of my excellent uncle. The tomb of Michael Angelo was among the small number of objects which attracted my attention. I made some reflections on the memory of this celebrated man; I felt from this moment, that no one can be truly great but those who leave behind them some durable monument of their talent and their genius. This idea was, however, soon effaced amid the constant whirl of dissipation in which I lived.

Among all the errors of my youth, I do not reckon it the least, that, during my short stay at Florence, I began to learn English under a very indifferent master, in place of endeavoring, from the example of those happy Tuscans, at least to make myself understood in their own divine language, which I mangled in the most barbarous manner every time I was obliged to employ it. Shame made me avoid speaking it as much as possible; but this feeling was not sufficiently powerful to overcome my indolence. I, however, corrected my pronunciation of our horrible *u*, Lombard or French, which had always displeased me by its meagre articulation, and by the little mouth made by the drawing in of the lips of those who pronounced it; and which may justly be termed the ridiculous grimace of monkeys. Even at present, after a five or six years' residence in France, where my ears might have become accustomed to its sound, I can never restrain my risible faculty either in the theatre or the drawing-room, when I behold little lips drawn together in speaking, as if they were blowing over boiling pottage.

Losing my time at Florence, seeing little, learning still less, I soon became disgusted, and again teasing my old preceptor, we departed for Lucca on the first of December. The single day which we remained at Lucca appeared to me an age, and we accordingly set out for Pisa. Another day passed at this place seemed equally long, though I was much pleased with the Campo-Santo. From this place we departed for Leghorn. This city enchanted me not only from the slight resemblance it bears to Turin, but from a view of the sea, of which I never became tired. During a stay of eight or ten days which we made at this place, I continued to mangle the English language in the most shocking manner, at the same time that I shut my ears against the Tuscan. On afterwards endeavoring to investigate the cause of this foolish preference, I became convinced that it resulted from a mistaken self-love, of which I was not aware at the time. Having lived two or three years almost wholly among the English, having heard their power and riches everywhere celebrated; having contemplated their great political influence, and on the other hand viewing Italy wholly degraded from her rank as a nation, and the Italians divided, weak, and enslaved, I was ashamed of being an Italian, and wished not to possess anything in common with this nation.

From Leghorn we proceeded to Siena, the site of which I did not admire; but here a ray of light darted suddenly across my mind; my feelings were subdued by hearing the language of these people, which they spoke with elegance, clearness, and perfect precision. I remained, however, only twenty-four hours among them. The period of my literary and political conversion was yet far distant; and it was necessary that

I should live for a long time at a distance from Italy, in order to know and appreciate the Italians.

I at length commenced, with a beating heart, my journey to Rome. I scarcely slept during the night, while in the day my imagination dwelt constantly on St. Peter's, the Pantheon, etc., which I had heard so much extolled. I also reverted to some traits of Roman history, which I perfectly recollected, though without order, as it was the only history which I had voluntarily read in my youth.

It was in December, 1766, I do not recollect the day, that I at length beheld the gate Del Popolo. The sight of this superb entrance attracted my eyes, and consoled me for the painful feelings I had experienced on witnessing the misery and wretchedness of the people of Viterbo. Scarcely had we alighted at the lodgings provided for us, than myself and my two young companions, leaving our tutor to his repose, began to run through the city, and among other places visited the Pantheon. Those youths displayed even greater surprise than myself at what we saw; a circumstance which I could readily explain on, several years afterwards, visiting the countries of which they were natives. We remained only eight days at Rome, every moment of which was occupied in gratifying our eager curiosity. For myself, I experienced more gratification in repairing twice a day to Saint Peter's than to view any other of the numerous novelties which presented themselves to our notice. I remarked that this admirable union of sublime objects did not at first make such a powerful impression on my mind as I expected; but my admiration continued to increase, though I only became fully sensible of the true value of so many wonders when, after being disgusted with

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the miserable display of ultramontane magnificence, I arrived some years afterwards in order to take up my permanent abode in Rome.

II.

WINTER approached, and I unceasingly importuned our preceptor to depart for Naples, where we intended to pass the carnival. We travelled in hired carriages. The roads between Rome and Naples were almost impassable, and my valet, Elias, having broken his arm by a fall from his horse near Radicofani, we took him into our carriage, from the jolting of which he suffered much.

He displayed on the occurrence of this accident great fortitude and presence of mind. He rose without assistance, and led his horse by the bridle for about a mile to this village. While he waited for a surgeon, he caused the sleeve of his coat to be opened, and, having found on inspection that his arm was really fractured, he placed the bones in a proper situation with his other hand, the injured arm being held by an assistant.

The surgeon, who entered the house nearly at the time we did, found the operation so well performed that he did nothing but apply proper bandages to the fractured member, and in less than an hour we again set out, accompanied in our carriage by the patient, who notwithstanding his sufferings uttered not a single complaint.

On arriving at Aquapendente we found the pole of our carriage was broken, which produced among us the greatest embarrassment. Elias alone, with his

arm in a sling, and only three hours after the accident, gave so much assistance, and displayed so much activity, that the pole was very soon repaired, and we reached Naples without any other accident.

I take pleasure in recording this adventure, as it displays the character of a man possessing presence of mind and courage far superior to his condition in life. It gives me particular satisfaction to praise and admire these simple and natural qualities. Woe to those tyrannical and infamous governments who neglect, fear, or stifle them.

We arrived at Naples on the second day of Christmas. The entrance of Capo di China by the street of Toledo exhibited this city to me under such a gay and pleasing aspect that it will never be effaced from my memory. But we were obliged to take up our lodgings at a very indifferent hotel, situated in one of the most gloomy and worst streets in the city, as all the best inns were already crowded with guests. This circumstance empoisoned the delight I felt in this charming city. The cheerful or gloomy situation of a house had always an irresistible influence on my weak head till I arrived at a much more advanced age.

A few days after I was introduced to several different families by the Sardinian minister. The carnival appeared to me more brilliant and agreeable than anything of the same kind I ever witnessed at Turin, not only on account of the public spectacles, but from the number of private entertainments, and the vast variety of exhibitions. In spite, however, of this constant whirl of dissipation, my being master of my own actions, notwithstanding I had plenty of money, was in the heyday of youth, and possessed of a prepossessing figure, I yet felt everywhere satiety, ennui, and

disgust. My greatest pleasure consisted in attending the opera buffa, though the gay and lively music left a deep and melancholy impression on my mind. A thousand gloomy and mournful ideas assailed my imagination, in which I delighted to indulge by wandering alone on the shores near the Chiaja and Portici. I had formed an acquaintance with several young Neapolitans, but without entertaining a friendship for any of them; my natural and evident backwardness prevented me from making the first advances, while it repressed every attempt at intimacy on the part of those with whom I associated. In my intercourse with the fair sex, for whom I always entertained a great predilection, the same backwardness kept me at a distance from those possessing gentleness and modesty of disposition, while my society was courted by the bold and forward; and thus I experienced a perpetual void in my heart; besides, the ardent passion I always entertained for visiting distant countries made me carefully shun the chains of love. At this period I avoided all its snares; I flew about the whole day in a light cabriolet in search of amusement; but from my extreme ignorance I reaped neither profit nor pleasure from any of the objects I visited. I merely ran from place to place, because repose was insupportable to me. I was introduced at court, and though Ferdinand IV. was only between twelve and sixteen, I discovered a great resemblance in his manners to those of the three other sovereigns whom I had already seen, our old worthy monarch Charles Emanuel, the Duke of Modena, Governor of Milan, and Leopold, Grand Duke of Tuscany, who was still extremely young. I had found the same resemblance in almost all the reigning princes, as well as in the fashions, habits, and manners

of the different courts. During my abode at Naples I began to intrigue anew, through the medium of the Sardinian minister, to obtain permission from the court of Turin to leave my tutor, and continue my travels alone. Though I and my young companions lived in the utmost harmony, and though our old mentor never thwarted us, yet, as it was necessary to consult him respecting the choice of inns, and as he was always irresolute and changeable, we found this subjection insupportable. With this view I entreated our minister to write in my favor to Turin, to give testimony to my good conduct, and affirm that I was fully capable of conducting myself and of travelling alone. The affair succeeding to my wish, I felt a lively gratitude towards the minister, who, taking a warm interest in all my concerns, was the first who advised me to apply to the study of politics in order to fit me for entering the diplomatic line. This idea highly delighted me. I conceived that of all situations this was the most desirable. My ideas were for a long time directed towards it, without, however, applying myself to those studies necessary to qualify me for such an important station in the community.

I was silent respecting my intentions, and, conceiving that a regular and orderly behavior was the only thing requisite in order to succeed in my designs, I assumed a sedateness of demeanor which was perhaps inconsistent with my years, and for which I was more indebted to instinct than to volition. I always possessed a certain gravity of manners, and something like regularity in everything I undertook; even when I committed a fault, I was not unconscious of the cause.

Hitherto I was entirely unacquainted with my own

powers ; I conceived myself incapable of everything ; I had no decided partiality for any pursuit ; obstinately cherishing the most gloomy and melancholy ideas, I never enjoyed a moment of tranquillity or repose. I was blindly led in everything by an instinct, which I neither fully comprehended nor endeavored to understand.

Several years after I became sensible that my unhappiness originated solely from the want, or rather the necessity, of having my heart occupied with a serious passion, and my mind bent on some ennobling and praiseworthy pursuit. When one of these resources failed me I became dissatisfied with everything, and overwhelmed with the most insupportable chagrin and disgust.

Anxious to avail myself of my newly acquired independence, I proposed, on the termination of the carnival, to set out alone for Rome, as our old mentor, who waited, as he said, for letters from Flanders, declined fixing any precise period for our departure. But, impatient to leave Naples and visit Rome, or, to speak more truly, impatient to travel alone and as my own master more than three hundred miles from my natal prison, I refused any longer to defer my journey, and accordingly took leave of my companions. In this respect I had judged properly, for they remained at Naples during the whole of April, and did not reach Venice in time to witness the solemnity of the ascension, which I ardently longed to behold.

III.

MY faithful Elias, who had preceded my arrival at Rome three days, had prepared for my reception a

very handsome apartment at the foot of Mount Trinity, which soon consoled me for the filth of Naples. But I was still haunted with the same melancholy, ennui, and restlessness; I was shamefully deficient in every useful or valuable acquisition, and my indifference for the beautiful and magnificent objects with which Rome abounds daily augmented. I visited only three or four of them, and to these I habitually returned. I went every day to the house of the Count de Rivera, the Sardinian minister, a venerable old man, who gave me the best advice, and of whose society I never became weary, though he was extremely deaf. On happening to call one day, a beautiful Virgil in folio was lying on the table, open at the sixth book of the *Æneid*. On seeing me enter, the good old man made me a sign to approach, and began to recite aloud with the greatest enthusiasm the beautiful verses on Marcellus, with which almost every one is acquainted. As for me, who no longer understood them, though I had translated, explained, and recited them six years before, I felt so ashamed, and experienced such profound grief, that during several days I did nothing but reflect on my ignorance, and nevermore returned to the house of the count. But the torpor and indolence of my mind were such that it required something more than a transient regret to overcome them. But this beneficial shame passed away without leaving any trace, and during several years I neither read Virgil, nor any other work of merit whatever.

In this second visit to Rome I was presented to that worthy old man, Pope Clement XIII. His venerable and majestic appearance and the magnificence of the palace of Monti Cavallo deprived me of all

repugnance to the usual ceremony of prostration, though I had read the ecclesiastical history, and knew how to estimate this ridiculous formality.

It was now that I began my third little plot, through the medium of the Count de Rivera, to obtain permission from the paternal court of Turin to travel for another twelvemonth through France, England, and Holland, the very names of which made my youthful heart throb with delight. This little artifice again proved successful, and I found myself at liberty to roam through the world during the year 1768. A little difficulty, however, occurred which greatly afflicted me; my guardian, with whom I had never reckoned, and who had never allowed me the whole of my revenues, when I had obtained this permission, wrote me, that for the second year he would give me a letter of credit for fifteen hundred sequins, having only allowed me twelve hundred for the expenses of my first journey. This niggardly declaration gave me much uneasiness, without, however, discouraging me. I had heard that living was extremely expensive in these countries, and I thought it hard to be deprived of the means of appearing with respectability. But, on the other hand, I durst not remonstrate with my avaricious guardian, lest I had been prevented from prosecuting my design. He would most probably have sounded in my ear the word *king*. He might have represented me to his majesty, who interferes in all the domestic concerns of the nobles, as a prodigal and a libertine, on which account I was anxious to avoid entering into a quarrel with him. But I determined in my own mind to save as much as possible of the twelve hundred sequins, in order to add to the fifteen hundred that were promised me.

Being thus restricted for the first time in regard to my expenditure, which had hitherto been sufficiently ample, I was seized with a fit of the most sordid avarice. It carried me so far, that I not only refrained from visiting the curiosities of Rome, in order to avoid the expense of drink-money; but I even refused my faithful Elias what was requisite for his support. So niggardly did I become in this respect, that he was at length compelled to inform me that he would be obliged to leave my service and seek a livelihood elsewhere. Thus then I was forced, contrary to my inclination, to augment his allowance.

With my mind contracted, and bent on my favorite scheme of saving, I departed for Venice early in the month of May. My avarice led me to hire mules, though I detested the lagging pace of these miserable animals; however, as the difference in the expense between this mode of conveyance and travelling post was very considerable, I reluctantly submitted to it. Leaving therefore Elias and my other domestics to follow, I mounted my meagre Rosinante, which, stumbling at every step, obliged me to pursue the greater part of my journey on foot. I thus proceeded, reckoning in a low voice on my fingers how much it would be possible to save during the ten or twelve days I should be on the road; how much during a month's abode at Venice, how much on my journey from Italy, and on this and that other occasion.

I engaged the muleteer the whole way to Bologna; but on arriving at Loretto, my lassitude was so intolerable, and my spirits so depressed, that I relinquished this detestable method of travelling. Thus my nascent avarice was effectually overcome by the impatience and ardor of my character. In spite of every consid-

eration I paid the muleteer for the period I had agreed on, and, relieved from an intolerable weight, with buoyant spirits I posted the remainder of the journey. From this period my economy has been always untinged with avarice.

I was now much less pleased with Bologna than on my former visit; my piety was no longer excited by the shrine of Loretto, and longing to behold Venice, respecting which I had heard so many wonders during my infancy, I reached Ferrara. I entered this city without recollecting that it was the birthplace and contained the tomb of the divine Ariosto, whose poems I had perused with so much delight, and which were the first that were impressed on my memory. To my shame be it spoken a benumbing torpor took possession of my faculties, and my taste for literature daily declined; I acquired, however, without perceiving it, some knowledge of men and manners from the various scenes I daily witnessed.

I took my passage on board a packet termed the Courier of Venice, in which I met with a company of female dancers, one of whom was extremely beautiful. This circumstance tended not, however, to render the voyage less tedious, which lasted two days and two nights before we reached Chiozzo; these nymphs acted the part of Susannas, and I could never tolerate assumed virtues.

On arriving at Venice its position filled me with delight and astonishment. I was even pleased with the jargon spoken in this city, because my ears had been accustomed to it in the comedies of Goldoni, which I had read in my infancy. This dialect is, in fact, rather agreeable, but it is wanting in dignity.

The crowd of foreigners, the number of public ex-

hibitions, and the various entertainments of every kind which were this year given in honor of the Prince of Würtemberg, joined to those which usually take place at the feast of the Ascension, detained me at Venice till the middle of June, though I did not reap much amusement in attending them. No sooner was their novelty over, than my habitual melancholy and ennui returned. I passed several days together in complete solitude, never leaving the house, nor stirring from the window, whence I made signs to a young lady who lodged opposite, and with whom I occasionally exchanged a few words. During the rest of the day, which hung very heavy on my hands, I passed my time either in sleeping or in dreaming, I knew not which, and frequently in weeping without any apparent motive. I had lost my tranquillity, and I was unable even to divine what had deprived me of it. A few years afterwards, on investigating the cause of this occurrence, I discovered that it proceeded from a malady which attacked me every spring, sometimes in April and sometimes in June; its duration was longer or shorter, and its violence very different, according as my mind was occupied.

I likewise experienced that my intellectual faculties resembled a barometer, and that I possessed more or less talent for composition in proportion to the weight of the atmosphere. During the prevalence of the solstitial and equinoctial winds I was always remarkably stupid, and uniformly evinced less penetration in the evening than in the morning. I likewise perceived that the force of my imagination, the ardor of enthusiasm, and capability of invention were possessed by me in a higher degree in the middle of winter or in the middle of summer than during the intermediate periods.

This materiality, which I believe to be common to all men of a delicate nervous system, has greatly contributed to lessen the pride with which the good I have done might have inspired me, in like manner as it has tended to diminish the shame I might have felt for the errors I have committed, particularly in my own art. In short, I am fully convinced that during the periods of which I now speak, it was beyond my power to produce anything great or excellent.

IV.

My stay at Venice was altogether productive of little satisfaction. I did not visit a tenth part of the masterpieces of painting, sculpture, and architecture, which everywhere abound in this city. I confess, too, with shame, that I did not even take a view of the arsenal. I paid not the least attention to the government, which differs from all others; if we cannot praise it for being the most excellent, it may at least be regarded as singular, having continued to exist during so many centuries in the greatest prosperity and tranquillity. A stranger to the fine arts, I vegetated in the most shameful indolence. At last I set out from Venice, and as usual felt more pleasure in leaving than in entering the city. I proceeded to Padua, which on the whole I beheld with little interest; I did not introduce myself to any one of its celebrated professors, whose friendship I was so anxious to cultivate in after-life; but at that period the very name of a professor, study, or an university filled me with dismay. I knew not even that a few miles distant from Padua reposed the ashes of our immortal Petrarch; but what had I to do with Petrarch, I who

had never either read his works, or comprehended or perceived their beauties; I who had thoughtlessly thrown them aside when they accidentally fell into my hands? Constantly oppressed by tedium and indolence, we rapidly passed through Vicenza, Verona, Mantua, and Milan, in our way to Genoa, a city which I had a few years before seen, and which had left in my mind a strong desire to revisit it.

I carried with me many letters of introduction to persons residing in the different countries through which we travelled, but I seldom took the trouble to deliver them. When I did present them at the houses of the persons to whom they were addressed, I seldom called again, though they themselves took infinite trouble to find me out, in which, however, they never almost succeeded. This conduct partly proceeded from a certain inherent pride and inflexibility of character, and partly from an almost invincible antipathy to new acquaintances; a disposition wholly irreconcilable with my mania for incessant travelling. Strange contradiction! I longed to be with the same persons, and to find them in different places! I soon also became weary of Genoa, in which at that time there was no Sardinian ambassador, and where I knew no one except my banker. I had determined to take my departure toward the end of June, when one day this banker, who was quite a man of the world, paid me a visit. He found me alone, abstracted and melancholy; he inquired how I occupied myself, and, having discovered that I had no books and little knowledge, and that I spent much of my time in gazing from my windows and running through the streets of Genoa or in aquatic excursions, he took pity on my youth, and insisted on my accompanying him to the residence of

one of his friends. The name of this friend was the Chevalier Charles Negroni. He had spent a part of his life at Paris, and, observing that I had an anxious desire to visit that celebrated city, spoke much on the subject. What he said relative to this city appeared to me exaggerated, till I arrived there a few months afterwards. This noble and worthy man introduced me to the best society in Genoa, and at the splendid festival given by the new Doge on his election he attended me as a guide and companion. It was at this time that I had nearly fallen in love with a beautiful and amiable female who appeared disposed to return my passion. But my rage for travelling, and my wish to leave Italy, rescued me from the fetters with which love threatened to enchain me.

Having taken my passage in a small felucca for Antibes, it seemed in my eyes as if I were about to make a voyage to the Indies. In my maritime excursions hitherto I had never been above a few miles out at sea. A fresh breeze sprung up, and soon carried us to a considerable distance from the shore; but as this soon changed into a squall, we were obliged to steer for Savona, where we remained for two days waiting the return of favorable weather. My spirits were so much affected by this delay, that I never left my chamber, not even to visit the celebrated Virgin of Savona; I neither wished to see any more of Italy, nor to hear it again spoken of. During my stay I was wholly absorbed in the contemplation of the pleasures I expected to realize on my arrival in France. My hyperbolic imagination always magnifies distant good and evil so much in my eyes, that when I experience either the one or the other, but particularly the former, the effect is destroyed.

On landing at Antibes, everything I beheld, being new, afforded me a subject of delight; for though many of these objects were inferior to others I had seen, yet their variety excited in my mind the most pleasurable sensations. I set out immediately for Toulon, the appearance of which afforded me little gratification, and where I saw nothing worthy of notice. From thence I proceeded to Marseilles; its fine port, regular and well-laid-out streets, but especially the number of beautiful and lively women it contained, rendered it particularly attractive in my eyes. In order to avoid travelling during the continuance of the great heats, I determined to take up my abode in it for one month. The landlord of the inn where I resided kept an excellent ordinary; and as this was frequented by a numerous company, I was under no necessity of speaking, which always cost me a painful effort: my taciturnity, the effect of a timidity I could never wholly vanquish, was redoubled by the incessant babbling of the French officers and merchants who resorted to this table in great numbers. From my disposition of mind it was impossible I could ever associate with any of them, either on a friendly or intimate footing. I attended willingly to their conversation, but without deriving any advantage from it; but I always listened without an effort to the discourse of fools, because we learn from them what they tell us not.

My journey to France was chiefly undertaken with a view to become acquainted with the French theatre. Two years previous to this period I had fallen in with a party of French comedians, and assiduously attended them during the whole summer. In this way I had become acquainted with many of their principal tragedies, and with most of their celebrated comedies.

Neither, however, while in Piedmont, nor during my first or second journey to France, did it enter into my head that I should ever entertain a desire or possess any talent for dramatic composition. I listened indeed attentively to the productions of others, but without any attempt to imitate them, or any indication that I myself should become a dramatic author. On the whole, though naturally less inclined to laugh than to mourn, I felt a greater predilection for comedy than tragedy. When afterwards reflecting on this subject, I became convinced that one of the principal causes of my indifference for tragedy was that in most of the French pieces, whole scenes, nay, even acts, are filled with subordinate characters, which by unnecessarily interrupting the main plot, destroyed the effect of the whole on my mind. Besides, my ears, though I wished not to be an Italian, were disgusted with the monotonous and insipid uniformity of their stately rhymes, and their disagreeable nasal terminations. Hence, without knowing why, though the actors were superior to ours, though the pieces were excellent, and depicted the emotions and passions in an admirable manner, yet I felt occasionally the most freezing indifference, and departed very little satisfied with their performance. The tragedies from which I derived the greatest gratification were *Alzire*, *Mahomet*, and a few others.

After the performance, one of my amusements at Marseilles was to bathe every evening in the sea. I was induced to indulge myself in this luxury in consequence of finding a very agreeable spot, on a tongue of land lying to the right of the harbor, where, seated on the sand, with my back leaning against a rock, I could behold the sea and sky without interruption. In the contemplation of these objects, embellished by the

rays of the setting sun, I passed my time dreaming of future delights. There I might unquestionably have become a poet, could I have given language to my thoughts and feelings.

The indolent man, or he who is not occupied in some useful pursuit, soon becomes disgusted with everything. So it was with me on the present occasion. I soon became weary of Marseilles. Haunted by a desire of seeing Paris, I left Marseilles on the 10th of August, rather like one wishing to fly from himself than as a traveller. I posted day and night without stopping till I reached Lyons. With my mind intently fixed on Paris, neither Aix, with its magnificent and delightful public walks, nor Avignon, celebrated for containing the tomb of Laura, nor Vaucluse, which had so long been the abode of the immortal Petrarch, could turn me aside from my purpose. Through fatigue, I was compelled to stop forty-eight hours at Lyons; but no sooner was my strength recruited, than I again hurried on, and arrived in less than three days at Paris, by the way of Bourgogne.

V.

It was on a cold, cloudy, and rainy morning, between the 15th and 20th of August, that I entered Paris, by the wretched suburb of St. Marceau. Accustomed to the clear and serene sky of Italy and Provence, I felt much surprised at the thick fog which enveloped the city, especially at this season. Never in my life did I experience more disagreeable feelings than on entering the damp and dirty suburb of Saint Germain, where I was to take up my lodging. What inconsiderate haste, what mad folly, had led me into this sink of filth and

nastiness! On entering the inn I felt myself thoroughly undeceived, and I should certainly have set off again immediately had not shame and fatigue withheld me. My illusions were still further dissipated when I began to ramble through Paris. The mean and wretched buildings, the contemptible ostentation displayed in a few houses dignified with the pompous appellation of hotels and palaces, the filthiness of the Gothic churches, the truly Vandal-like construction of the public theatres at that time, besides innumerable other disagreeable objects, of which not the least disgusting to me was the plastered countenances of many very ugly women, far outweighed in my mind the beauty and elegance of the public walks and gardens, the infinite variety of fine carriages, the lofty façade of the Louvre, as well as the number of spectacles and entertainments of every kind.

The weather still continued gloomy and unfavorable, and for nearly fifteen days, during which I remained at Paris, I never once beheld the splendid orb of day. The state of the atmosphere had always a considerable influence on my mental faculties. Hence, perhaps, it is that the impression made on my mind during my abode in Paris remains so indelibly engraven on my imagination, that even now, at the distance of twenty-three years, I think I still experience it, notwithstanding my reason combats, and in part condemns it.

The court had removed to Compiègne, where it intended to remain during the month of September. The Sardinian minister, for whom I had letters, not being at Paris, I knew not a single soul excepting some foreigners whom I had become acquainted with in Italy, and who like myself were unknown to any person of distinction. Ever tormented by the demon of melan-

choly, I spent most of my time in the public walks, attending theatrical amusements. Our ambassador did not return from Fontainebleau to Paris till towards the close of November; by him I was introduced to various families, and particularly to those of the foreign ministers. It was at the house of the Spanish ambassador that I was first induced to play at faro. Though I neither won nor lost, I soon grew weary of this as well as every other amusement, and resolved to depart in the month of January for London.

Satiated with Paris, though in truth I was scarcely acquainted with the streets, my anxiety to visit new scenes was greatly abated. I found those I had hitherto beheld not only fall far beneath the picture I had drawn of them in imagination, but also beneath those I had seen in Italy.

It was in London then that I was at length taught to know and appreciate Naples, Rome, Venice, and Florence.

Before departing for England, our ambassador proposed to present me at the court of Versailles. An anxious wish to see a court generally esteemed superior in splendor to any other induced me to accept his proposal. The 1st of January, 1768, was the day fixed on for this purpose. I had been informed that the king never deigned to address any but the most celebrated foreigners; I could not, however, reconcile myself to the haughty and unbending mien of Louis XV. He received with a cold and supercilious air those who were presented to him, surveying them from head to foot. It seemed as if on presenting a dwarf to a giant he should view him smiling, or perhaps say, "Ah! the little animal!" or if he remained silent, his air and manner would express the same derision. Such con-

tempt soon ceased, however, to afflict me, when a few moments afterward I observed his majesty receive other foreigners of much higher rank than myself in the same manner. After a short prayer, the king took the road to the chapel, near the door of which the mayor and municipality of Paris, advancing, stammered out the usual compliments of the season. The taciturn monarch replied by a slight inclination of his head, and, turning to one of his courtiers, inquired what had become of the sheriffs who usually attended the mayor on such occasions, when a voice exclaimed from among the crowd, "They have stuck fast in the mud"; on which all the court laughed, and the monarch himself even smiled.

Such is the unsteadiness of fortune, that nearly twenty years afterwards I beheld another Louis receive much more graciously a very different compliment made to him by another mayor on the 17th of July, 1789. It was then the courtiers themselves who *stuck fast in the mud*, on coming from Versailles to Paris. Perhaps I might return thanks to Heaven for having been an eyewitness of this spectacle, were I not fully convinced that the reign of *le peuple souverain* will ultimately prove more ruinous to France and to the world at large than that of the Capets.

VI.

I LEFT Paris about the middle of January, with a countryman of my own, a young man of genius, of a prepossessing figure, and who was considerably older than myself. In other respects he was equally ignorant as I, still less given to reflection, and fonder of mixing in society than to study and observe mankind.

He was the cousin to our ambassador at Paris, and nephew of Prince Masserano, Spanish ambassador at the Court of London. It was previously settled that we should take up our residence at the house of this nobleman. I was not over partial to travelling companions, but as we were both going to one place, I readily reconciled myself to his society.

My new comrade was extremely lively and loquacious; and we had the mutual satisfaction, I of listening and holding my tongue, he of declaiming and extolling himself. He was extremely vain of his person, having been a great favorite with the ladies; and he recounted with a grave air his good fortune, which I heard without the smallest envy. During the evening when we went to inns, while waiting supper we usually played at chess, in which he always came off conqueror, for I never entered into the spirit of the game. On repairing to Calais, we took the road by Lisle, Douai, and St. Omer. The cold was so intense, that one night, though we travelled with the blinds up, and took other precautions, both our bread and wine were frozen. I rejoiced at this excessive cold, for I always love extremes.

On leaving the French coast, the cold became much less intense, and no snow fell during our journey from Dover to London. England, and especially the metropolis, highly delighted me at first sight. The roads, the inns, the horses, the females, the absence of mendicity, the neatness and conveniency of the houses, the incessant bustle in the suburbs as well as in the capital, all conspired to fill my mind with delight. In my future journeys to England I never found any reason to change this favorable opinion.

At London it is more easy to procure introductions

to the houses of private families than at Paris. Induced by this circumstance, and the influence of my travelling companion, I plunged into dissipation. In general I am little solicitous to overcome obstacles, when I expect no benefit to result from it. The truly paternal benevolence of Prince de Masserano tended greatly to give a new turn to my character.

This worthy old man was much attached to the Piedmontese, being a native of Piedmont, though his father had afterwards settled in Spain. Perceiving, after a residence of three months, that I made no progress in knowledge, and becoming disgusted with assemblies, balls, and routs, I determined no longer to play the lord in the drawing-room, but the coachman at the gate.

Much to his delight, I frequently drove my companion through the streets of London, leaving to him all the glory of gallantry, while I acquitted myself in my new character of coachman with so much skill and address that even in the collision of coach-poles, so common at Ranelagh and other places of public amusement, I generally came off with honor, and without my horses suffering the least injury. My amusements through the course of the winter consisted in being on horseback during five or six hours every morning, and in being seated on the coach-box for two or three hours every evening, whatever might be the state of the weather. During the month of April my companion and I travelled through some of the richest counties of England. In this excursion we visited Portsmouth, Salisbury, Bath, Bristol, and returned by the way of Oxford to London. The country then so much enchanted me that I determined to settle in it, not that I was much attached to any individual, but because

I was delighted with the scenery, the simple manners of the inhabitants, the modesty and beauty of the women, and above all with the enjoyment of political liberty,—all which made me overlook its mutable climate, the melancholy almost inseparable from it, and the exorbitant price of all the necessaries of life. On returning from this tour, which still farther augmented my inclination to roam, I again felt myself urged by the mania of travelling to visit new scenes; it gave me much pain, therefore, to be obliged to defer my voyage to Holland till the month of June. I embarked at Harwich for Helvoetsluys, which, favored by a fortunate breeze, I reached in twelve hours.

Holland during the summer season exhibits a cheerful and smiling aspect, but it would have pleased me still more had I not previously visited England; for, however much we may admire its population and riches, its wise laws, the industry and activity of its inhabitants, yet in all of these it is exceeded by England. In fact, after much travelling and observation, the only two countries of Europe in which I have uniformly wished to fix my residence are England and Italy; because in the former art has everywhere changed and subjugated nature, and because in the latter nature always appears predominant and in its pristine force and vigor.

During my stay at the Hague, which was protracted beyond what I had intended, I fell into the snares which love had so often spread in vain to entrap me. While thus assailed with the shafts of love, my heart was not insensible to the soothing influence of friendship.

The name of my new friend was Joseph d'Acunha, the Portuguese envoy at the Hague. In him were united

to much originality of character a well-informed mind and great elevation of sentiment. A mutual taciturnity and sympathy of character insensibly operated to unite us in the bonds of friendship. This union was still farther cemented by reciprocal candor and frankness. The excellent advice given me by my worthy friend will never be erased from my memory. He it was who first made me blush at my indolent and absurd mode of life, at my dislike to reading, and at my utter want of acquaintance with the works of our best authors in prose and verse, as well as with the productions of our most celebrated philosophers. He mentioned in particular the immortal Machiavel, whom I knew only by name. Biassed by the prejudices of education, we too readily give credit to the calumnies propagated by his detractors, who have frequently neither read nor comprehended him. My friend D'Acunha presented me with a copy of his works, which I still preserve, and on which I have at different times written marginal notes. What seemed to me then very extraordinary was that a desire for study never took possession of my mind, nor did my ideas begin to unfold themselves, till I became occupied with the passion of love. This passion at once deprived me of the means of applying myself, and stimulated me to proceed. Never did I find myself in a more suitable state for the composition of any literary work than when I was actuated by the desire of presenting my productions to her who inspired me with this omnipotent passion.

My happiness in Holland was not of long duration. [The family of the lady whom Alfieri adored had recently come into possession of a large estate in Switzerland, and, apparently to separate her from him, she

was removed to this place for the approaching autumn, which was then near.] As she could not assume the resolution to inform me of the day of her departure, and as I equally feared myself to make any inquiry respecting it, the intelligence first reached me through my friend D'Acunha, who, putting a small billet into my hands, acquainted me that she had been forced to quit the Hague.

I should never obtain credit, were I to recount all the follies I committed on this occasion. While, however, I absolutely implored death to come to my aid, I said not a word to any one. I feigned sickness in order to induce my friend to leave me to myself, and called in a surgeon, who took away some blood from my arm. No sooner had he quitted my chamber than I pretended to fall asleep, and, closing my bed-curtains, mused for a few minutes on what I should do. I then loosened the bandage from my arm, that I might die by loss of blood. But my faithful and intelligent Elias had seen my frenzy, and been instructed before his departure to watch my conduct narrowly. With this view, pretending to believe that I had called him, he approached my bedside, and suddenly opened the curtains. Equally surprised and abashed, at the same time perhaps even repenting of my folly, or at least not fully determined in my resolution, I told him that the bandage round my arm had become loose. Feigning to believe me, he immediately replaced it, but never again left me to myself. As soon as my friend was informed by him of my situation, he visited me without delay, and forced me to quit my bed. He had me immediately conveyed to his house, where I continued several days, during which he never left me alone. I became dull and pensive, but whether from shame or diffidence, I concealed my inward grief. I neither

spoke nor wept. The influence of time, however, and the sage counsels of my friend, together with the various amusements in which he compelled me to participate, and a ray of hope that I should once again behold the mistress of my heart on her return to Holland, but above all, perhaps, the volatility of temper natural to nineteen, tended gradually to assuage my sorrow. My mind remained long a prey to grief, but reason at length became triumphant. As soon as the anguish of my mind began to abate, though it still rankled in my bosom, I formed the resolution of returning to Italy, finding it altogether insupportable to remain in a country where everything tended to recall to my mind the transient happiness I had enjoyed. I found it, however, extremely difficult to tear myself from my new friend, though he himself urged me to persevere in my resolution, being fully persuaded that travelling and new objects, distance and time, would eventually operate my cure.

I left Utrecht about the middle of September, and took the road to Brussels. I proceeded through Lorraine, Alsace, Switzerland, and Savoy, without stopping, unless to sleep. On my arrival in Piedmont, I directed my course to Cumiana, my sister's country residence. From thence I went to Suza, without passing through Turin, as I wished to avoid all intercourse with mankind, for I perceived that to my cure retirement was absolutely indispensable. During this journey, of all the cities through which I passed, as Nancy, Strasburg, Basle, and Geneva, I beheld only the walls. I never once opened my mouth to speak to my faithful Elias. I spoke to him only by signs; while he, to conform himself to my humor obeyed me, and silently anticipated all my wants.

VII.

I REMAINED six weeks in the country with my sister, and afterwards accompanied her on her return to Turin. From my great increase of growth during the last two years none of my acquaintances recognized me. The idle and roving life I led had produced the most beneficial effects on my health. On passing through Geneva I purchased a parcel of books, among which were the works of Rousseau, Montesquieu, Helvetius, and others. Scarcely had I returned home, with my heart filled with melancholy and love, than I perceived the necessity of occupying my mind with some species of study. But to what could I apply it? A neglected education, followed by six years of dissipation and total idleness, had wholly unfitted me for serious application. Being undetermined whether to remain at home or recommence my travels, I domesticated myself in my sister's house during the winter, wholly relinquishing society, and passing my days in reading and walking. I perused only French works, and among others began the *Héloïse* of Rousseau several times; but, though possessing very warm and ardent feelings, I found it so much labored, and abounding with an affectation of sentiment foreign to the heart, that I could never finish the first volume. I did not understand the political works of this author, and left them behind me. The prose works of Voltaire gave me the greatest pleasure, but his poetry did not suit my taste. I never read the whole of the *Henriade*, and only a few detached passages of his *Pucelle*, as everything that is obscene fills me with disgust. Some of his tragedies I also perused about the same

time. Montesquieu I read twice from beginning to end with a mingled sentiment of pleasure and surprise, and perhaps also with some profit. L'Esprit d'Helvetius left a profound but disagreeable impression on my mind; but the book of all others which gave me the most delight, and beguiled many of the tedious hours of winter, was Plutarch. I perused five or six times the lives of Timoleon, Cæsar, Brutus, Pelopidas, and some others. I wept, raved, and fell into such a transport of fury, that if any one had been in the adjoining chamber they must have pronounced me out of my senses. Every time that I came to any of the great actions of these celebrated individuals, my agitation was so extreme that I could not remain seated. I was like one beside himself, and shed tears of mingled grief and rage at having been born at Piedmont, and at a period and under a government where it was impossible to conceive or execute any great design.

During this winter I studied with the greatest ardor the planetary system, and the laws which regulate the celestial bodies. I pushed my studies as far as it was possible without the aid of geometry, with which I was wholly unacquainted, or in other words, I found myself incompetent to master the historical part of astronomy, which is purely mathematical. Notwithstanding my gross ignorance in this respect, I comprehended enough of this divine science to elevate my mind to the immensity of the universe. No study could have been better calculated than this to occupy and soothe my mind if I had possessed the necessary knowledge to prosecute it. While engaged in this praiseworthy pursuit, which, however, increased my taciturnity, and augmented my melancholy and disgust for every common amusement, I was unceasingly

importuned by my brother-in-law to enter into the married state. I was naturally attached to a domestic life; but after having visited England at nineteen, and read Plutarch with the greatest interest at twenty years of age, I experienced the most insufferable repugnance at marrying and having my children born at Turin. With a fickleness, however, natural to my years, I at length consented that my brother-in-law should negotiate a marriage for me with the rich young heiress of a respectable family. This lady was rather handsome, and her black eyes would doubtless have made me forget Plutarch, in like manner as Plutarch had diminished my attachment to the fair Hollander. I must here avow to my shame that at this period I was more influenced by a desire for riches than beauty. I calculated that by this union my fortune would receive a great augmentation, and that I should be thus enabled to cut, as the world terms it, a brilliant figure; but my happy destiny overruled my weak judgment.

The lady, after evincing a marked predilection for me, was deterred from her purpose by one of her aunts, who favored the addresses of a young gentleman, whose family was indeed less affluent than my own, but who had a number of rich relatives, and, besides, stood in high favor at court. He had been one of the pages to the Duke of Savoy, the presumptive heir to the crown, who afterwards conferred on him many benefits. He displayed mild and agreeable manners, and possessed an excellent character, while I, on the contrary, was regarded as a singular being, who did not bend his judgment to the slavish opinions of the age, and who, instead of concealing his sentiments, openly ridiculed the usages and customs of his country; an offence never to be forgiven. Hence my rival obtained the

preference. This choice was extremely fortunate for the young lady, as she led a happy life with the family into which she entered. It was equally fortunate for me, since, had I burdened myself with a wife and family, I must have taken an everlasting farewell of the Muses. This refusal was at once a subject of pain and consolation to me. While the affair was in agitation I frequently felt regret, and a kind of shame I durst not avow. I blushed at the consciousness of being influenced in this instance by the consideration of riches, and of acting in opposition to my usual way of thinking; but one act of weakness produces a second, which in like manner brings others in its train. One of the motives for this absurd cupidity was the project I had formed, during my stay at Naples, of devoting myself to the diplomatic line, to succeed in which I deemed the possession of wealth indispensable. In this design I was still farther encouraged to proceed by the advice of my brother-in-law, an old courtier. Happily on my failure in this matrimonial union I resigned every idea of entering into the diplomatic corps. I never solicited any official situation, and thank Heaven my foolish project was never communicated to any one but my brother-in-law.

Foiled in my two projects, I resolved to continue my travels. I had settled all pecuniary concerns with my guardian, from whose power I immediately emancipated myself on attaining my twenty-first year. Being now fully acquainted with the state of my own affairs, I found myself much more at ease than my guardian would have made me believe. In this respect he rendered me an essential service, by accustoming me to regulate and restrain my wants; it also imbued my mind with a love of order and regularity from which

I have never deviated. Finding myself in possession of a yearly income of 2,500 sequins, besides a large sum of ready money accumulated during the period of my minority, I deemed myself sufficiently rich for a bachelor, especially in my country. Having therefore abandoned every idea of augmenting my fortune, I prepared for the recommencement of my travels on a more liberal scale of expense than formerly.

VIII.

AFTER having obtained the necessary permission from the king, I departed for Vienna in the month of May, 1769. I left to my faithful Elias the trouble of regulating our expenses, and began seriously to reflect on men and manners. To the chagrin, indolence, and a physical desire for change, which actuated me during my first travels, had now succeeded a certain pleasing melancholy which led to reflection. This partly resulted from the influence of love, and partly from the works I had perused during the last six months. The essays of Montaigne proved to me of the greatest utility; and it is to them perhaps that I owe the little capability of thinking which I possessed at an after period of my life. This work in ten small volumes became my constant travelling companion; and I derived from it both instruction and pleasure. It flattered even my ignorance and idleness, because I opened by chance any volume, and after reading a page or two again closed it, and passed whole hours in reflecting on what I had read. I was also ashamed to meet Latin quotations both in prose and verse in almost every page, which I could not understand without having recourse to the translations in the notes, which I was foolish enough

to do, without even an attempt to understand the original; but what was still worse, I skipped over the extracts from our most celebrated Italian poets without an effort to comprehend them. Hence it may be easily conceived how great was my ignorance, and that it became every day more difficult for me to express myself in our divine language.

I arrived at Vienna by the way of Milan and Venice, two cities which I had a strong desire to revisit, after which I proceeded to Trent, Innspruck, Augsburg, and Munich, where I stopped only a short time. I found Vienna nearly as small as Turin, without being so advantageously situated. Here I remained during all the summer in a state of complete idleness. In July I set out on an excursion as far as Buda, in order to view part of Hungary. Having again become extremely idle, I fled to company as a relief, taking care, however, to secure my heart against the approaches of love. I might easily, during my stay at Vienna, have been introduced to the celebrated poet Metastasio, at whose house our minister, the old and respectable Count Canale, passed his evenings in a select company of men of letters, whose chief amusement consisted in reading portions from the Greek, Latin, and Italian classics. Having taken an affection for me, he wished, out of pity to my idleness, to conduct me thither. But I declined accompanying him, either from my usual awkwardness, or from the contempt which the constant habit of reading French works had given me for Italian productions. Hence I concluded that this assemblage of men of letters with their classics could be only a dismal company of pedants. Besides, I had seen Metastasio, in the gardens of Schoenbrunn, perform the customary genuflection to Maria Theresa in

such a servile and adulatory manner, that I, who had my head stuffed with Plutarch, and who embellished every theory, could not think of binding myself, either by the ties of familiarity or friendship, with a poet who had sold himself to a despotism which I so cordially detested. My rude and eccentric notions uniting themselves to the passions of twenty, rendered my character altogether original, and even ridiculous.

In the month of September I continued my journey through Prague and Dresden, where I remained a month. From thence I went to Berlin, and in this city took up my abode for an equal length of time. On entering the states of the great Frederick, which appeared to me like a vast guard-house, my horror against this man of blood redoubled. On being presented to his majesty, I experienced not the slightest emotion either of surprise or respect; but on the contrary, a rising feeling of indignation, which became daily strengthened in my mind on beholding oppression and despotism assuming the mask of virtue. Count de Finch, who introduced me to the royal presence, inquired why, as I was in the service of my sovereign, I did not wear my uniform, to which I replied, I thought the court was already sufficiently crowded with uniforms. The king addressed to me the few words customary on such occasions. I regarded him with the greatest attention, fixing my eyes respectfully on his, while I mentally thanked Heaven I was not born his slave. Towards the middle of November I departed from this Prussian encampment, which I regarded with detestation and horror.

After remaining three days at Hamburg I proceeded to Denmark, and reached Copenhagen in the beginning of December. This country was not only agreeable to

me from its resemblance to Holland, but from a certain air of activity, commerce, and industry, which is never to be found under an absolute monarchy. In fact, the general welfare and prosperity of any country affords the best eulogium on its government. None of the elements, however, of social happiness is to be found in the states of Frederick the Great, though he *commands* letters, arts, and industry to flourish under his protection. I preferred Copenhagen and Denmark, because they differed from Berlin and Prussia; a country which of all others left the most painful and disagreeable impression on my mind, though I beheld in it, especially in the capital, many architectural and other objects worthy of attention; but even at present, after the lapse of so many years, I cannot recall the idea of this nation of soldiers without experiencing the same indignation I felt on first entering it.

During the winter I began to stammer the Italian with Count Catanti, the Neapolitan envoy at the Danish court. The count was brother-in-law to the celebrated prime minister of Naples, Marquis Tanucci, formerly a professor in the University of Pisa. I became better pleased with the Tuscan language and pronunciation on comparing it with the hissing, nasal, and guttural sound of the Danish, to which I was daily compelled to listen, happily, however, without understanding it. Though greatly deficient in point of elegance and precision, a merit which the natives of Tuscany possess in an eminent degree, my pronunciation of the Italian was nevertheless pure and perfectly Tuscan. As my ears were wounded by any deviation in this respect, I had accustomed myself to pronounce as well as possible the *u*, *z*, *gi*, *ci*, and other Tuscanisms. Count Catanti urged me no longer to neglect

this beautiful language, and I was the more inclined to profit by his advice, as no consideration would have induced me to pass for a native of France. I began then to read Italian works, and among others the Dialogues of Aretino, which disgusted me by their obscenity, though I was charmed with the copiousness and elegance of the diction. I perused for the third and fourth time my favorite Plutarch, without, however, relinquishing Montaigne, so that my head was at once filled with a medley of philosophy, politics, and libertinism. When my health permitted me to go abroad, my greatest amusement in this northern climate was driving a sledge with inconceivable velocity; an exercise which soothed and gratified my ardent imagination.

Towards the end of March I set out for Sweden, though the Sound was not frozen, and Scania not yet covered with snow. As soon as I had passed the village of Norkoping, I found the winter set in anew with great rigor. From the heaps of snow, and from the accumulation of ice in the lakes, I was obliged to relinquish my carriage, and pursue the remainder of my journey to Stockholm in sledges. The novelty of this spectacle, the majestic and wild aspect of the immense forests, lakes, and precipices, filled my mind with wonder and delight. Though I had never read Ossian, yet I perceived many of those rural images rising in my mind which I afterwards discovered in the beautiful verses of our celebrated Cesarotti.

I was much pleased not only with the aspect of Sweden, but with the manners of all classes of the inhabitants, either because I loved extremes, or for reasons which I am unable to explain. The mixed form of the Swedish government, through which appear some dawnings of

liberty, induced me to enter upon the study of it ; but utterly incapable of serious and continued application, I could not persevere sufficiently to render myself master of the subject. I understood enough, however, to perceive that the poverty of the four classes who possess the right of voting, and the extreme corruption of the nobles and citizens who were influenced by the gold of France or Russia, rendered it impossible that any concord could subsist among the different orders of the state, and annihilated every idea of just and rational liberty. I continued to amuse myself with making excursions in their sledges into the gloomy forests, and immense frozen lakes, till the 20th of April, at which period the thaw was so instantaneous, from the influence of the sun and the wind from the sea, that in four days scarce a vestige remained of the accumulated snows of winter. These were succeeded by the most beautiful verdure, which produced a surprising and truly romantic effect.

IX.

MY restless temper induced me to quit Stockholm, though I was highly pleased with it, about the middle of May, in order to pursue my route through Finland to Petersburg. I made an excursion as far as the celebrated University of Upsala, and in my progress visited different iron-mines ; but as I neither examined with sufficient attention the curiosities they contained, nor took notes of what I saw, I must be silent on this head. When I reached Grisselham, a small port in Sweden, situated on its eastern coast, opposite the Gulf of Bothnia, winter, which I seemed as it were to pursue, had already commenced. The sea was already in a great

measure frozen, and the passage to the first of the five small islands, lying at the entrance of the gulf, was rendered impassable for small craft of every kind. No alternative was therefore left us but to remain three days in this dreary abode, till fresh breezes should spring up, and dissolve the thick crust of ice, which separated with great noise, forming large floating masses, between which a boat might have passed, had we not dreaded the danger of being driven against them. On the following day a fisherman arrived at Grisselham, in a small boat, from the first island where we were to land. He agreed to conduct us if we were inclined to encounter the risk. I immediately consented to this proposal. I had procured a larger boat than his for the convenience of my carriage; but this, while it augmented the difficulty, diminished the danger, because it was better able to withstand any shock it might receive from the huge masses of floating ice. It happened as I had foreseen. These little ice islands, floating on the surface of the sea, caused it to resemble a piece of ground hollowed out and cleft on all sides. As the wind was extremely feeble, the shocks which my little bark received from the masses of ice did not in the least injure it. However, as they floated round us on every side, and accumulated before the prow of the vessel, threatening every instant to drive us back to the mainland, it became necessary to have recourse to the hatchet. Oftener than once were the sailors and I forced to get upon these floating islands to break and detach them from the sides of the vessel, in order to give passage to the prow, and to enable us to act with our oars. Though the passage between the continent and the first island did not exceed seven Swedish miles, it took us ten hours to accomplish it. This sea-

adventure amused me highly, though perhaps such details may not prove equally gratifying to my readers; but, let it be remembered, I address them to Italians, who are not accustomed to such spectacles. Our course to the other islands being shorter, and less encumbered with ice, was much more readily effected. The contemplation of this sterile and savage country, together with the profound and unbroken stillness of the atmosphere, served to excite in my mind ideas at once sublime and melancholy.

I at length landed at Abo, the capital of Swedish Finland, and pursued my journey through excellent roads, and with good horses, to Petersburg, where I arrived near the end of May. I cannot even tell whether this was by day or night, for in such a northern climate there is scarcely any night at that season of the year. I felt so much exhausted by never leaving my carriage for several nights successively, my head was so confused, and I was moreover so wearied with the perpetual light, that I knew neither the day of the week nor the hour of the day on which I arrived; I scarcely even knew what part of the globe I was in, inasmuch as the manners, the dress, and long beards of the Muscovites induced me rather to believe that I was in Tartary than in Europe.

I had read the history of Peter the Great by Voltaire,—a work which I obtained at the Academy of Turin from the Russian students, whose nation was much spoken of at this time as having lately emerged from barbarism. My imagination, which had never yet failed to magnify everything, left me on the present occasion as usual the regret of being deceived. Hence I approached Petersburg with a mind wound up to an extraordinary pitch of anxiety and expectation. But alas! no sooner

had I reached this Asiatic assemblage of wooden huts, than Rome, Genoa, Venice, and Florence rose to my recollection, and I could not refrain from laughing. What I afterwards saw of this country tended still more strongly to confirm my first impression that it merited not to be seen. Everything, except their beards and their horses, disgusted me so much, that during six weeks I remained among these savages I wished not to become acquainted with any one, nor even to see the two or three youths with whom I had associated at Turin, and who were descended from the first families of the country. I took no measure to be presented to the celebrated Autocratrix Catherine II., nor did I even behold the countenance of a sovereign who in our days has outstripped fame. On investigating at a future period the reason of such extraordinary conduct, I became convinced that it proceeded from a certain intolerance of character and a hatred to every species of tyranny, and which in this particular instance attached itself to a person suspected of the most horrible crime, — the murder of a defenceless husband. I have frequently heard it alleged by the defenders of Catherine that she had no other object, in assuming the reins of government, than to repair the evils committed by her husband, to give a constitution to the country, and to restore the Russians at least in part to the rights of which they had been deprived by slavery. I beheld them, however, groaning beneath the despotic yoke of this philosophic Clytemnestra. Indignant at what I saw, I declined going to Moscow, as had been my original intention, and I ardently longed to return to Europe. With this view I set out towards the close of June, and passed through Riga and Revel. The monotonous appearance of the barren

and sandy plains I traversed more than overbalanced the pleasure I had received from the view of the immense and magnificent forests of Sweden. I pursued my journey by Königsberg and Dantzic. This last city, which had heretofore enjoyed opulence and freedom, began to experience, about this time, the despotic sway of the King of Prussia, who had taken possession of it with his troops. Thus, while filled with hatred against the Russians and Prussians, I at length arrived the second time at Berlin, after a month's journey, which to me proved the most tedious, vexatious, and harassing of any I had ever undertaken, being everywhere forced during my route to make known my name, age, rank, and the object of my travels, all which a sentinel demands of you on entering, traversing, and leaving every little village; in short, this of all the journeys I ever performed was the most gloomy and sorrowful. I visited Zorndorff, a spot rendered famous by the sanguinary battle fought between the Russians and Prussians, where thousands of men on both sides were immolated on the altar of despotism, and thus escaped from the galling yoke which oppressed them. The place of their interment was easily recognized by its greater verdure, and by yielding more abundant crops than the barren and unproductive soil in its immediate vicinity. On this occasion I reflected with sorrow that slaves seem everywhere only born to fertilize the soil on which they vegetate.

My exhausted strength forced me to stop three days at Berlin. Towards the end of July I again set out, and in my progress passed through Magdeburg, Brunswick, Göttingen, Cassel, and Frankfort. On entering Göttingen, so justly renowned for its university, I met with a beautiful little ass, which I treated with the

most sumptuous fare in my power, not having seen one for the last twelve months, as these animals are neither bred nor thrive in the North. This encounter between an Italian and German ass in so celebrated a university would have inspired me to write the most ludicrous and laughable verses, had my abilities corresponded with my inclination. But my incapacity for writing progressively augmented: I contented myself with musing on this subject, and spent a happy day wholly absorbed in thinking on my ass. These halcyon days seldom occurred with me, as I lived in the greatest retirement, without any occupation, without ever looking into a book or opening my mouth.

From Frankfort I proceeded to Mentz, where I embarked on the Rhine, and descended that beautiful river as far as Cologne, experiencing during my passage the greatest pleasure from the view of its verdant and luxuriant banks. From Cologne, I returned by the way of Aix-la-Chapelle to Spa, at which place I had spent several weeks two years before, and which I always wished to revisit. The manners of the inhabitants were exactly conformable to my taste, because I could remain wholly unknown amidst incessant festivity and bustle. I felt myself so much at my ease, that I prolonged my stay from the middle of August to the end of September, — along period for one of my restless disposition. Here I purchased two Irish horses; one of them was a noble animal, and I became very fond of it. I rode out every day, dined at an ordinary, and went every evening to witness the performance of some young and beautiful female dancers. It was thus that I spent, or more properly, mis-spent my time. As the bathing season was nearly over, and as most of the company had already left Spa, I set out for Holland,

where I expected to see my friend, D'Acunha. It was but too true that the lady whom I had so passionately loved was no longer at the Hague, having quitted that city in order to reside with her family at Paris. Not wishing to separate from my horses, I sent my domestic Elias on before with the carriage, while I, walking and riding alternately, took the road to Liege. In this city I found an old acquaintance, a French envoy. I complied with his wish to introduce me to the Prince Bishop, not so much through complaisance as the eccentricity of my character. Having never seen the court of the Empress Catherine, I was anxious to view that of the Prince of Liege. During my stay at Spa I had been introduced to a yet more petty ecclesiastical prince, the Abbé of Stavelo, in the Ardennes. In passing through his bishopric, the same French envoy conducted me to his residence, where we partook of an excellent dinner. From Liege I proceeded with my favorite horses by Brussels and Antwerp, and crossing the Mordyke, pursued my journey through Rotterdam to the Hague. My friend, with whom I had kept up a regular correspondence, received me with open arms, and, finding me less foolish than formerly, endeavored by the most wise and benevolent counsels to impress on my mind the propriety of persevering in the road to improvement. I remained with him nearly two months, but as the season was already far advanced, and as I anxiously wished to revisit England, we bade each other adieu towards the termination of November. I pursued the same route as in my former journey, and arriving happily at Harwich I reached London in a few days. I found all the friends with whom I had formerly associated at the time of my first visit, particularly Prince Masserano, the Spanish ambassador, and

the Marquis Caraccioli, the Neapolitan minister, a man possessing much sagacity and of a lively character. They both treated me with parental kindness during my stay in that capital, where I found myself in very difficult and perplexing circumstances.

X.

ON my first visit to London, I became deeply enamored of a lady of high rank. It was perhaps her image, unconsciously engraven on my mind, that had not a little contributed to render the country delightful in my eyes, and to induce me to revisit it. Though the lady in question appeared not unfavorable to my suit, yet my repulsive and boorish character preserved me from her chains. Having become somewhat more civilized on my return, and being of an age more susceptible of a violent attachment, while forgetting what I had suffered at the Hague from the dominion of this passion, I fell desperately in love. My feelings were so vehement and outrageous, that even now, when entering on my ninth lustrum, I shudder at the recollection. I had frequent opportunities of seeing the mistress of my heart at the house of Prince Masserano, whose lady shared with her a box at the opera. I never saw her at her own house, because the English ladies were not then accustomed to receive visits, particularly from foreigners.

Time flew rapidly on, and the spring fast approached, when she was to depart for the country with the intention of remaining seven or eight months, and where it would be utterly impossible for me to see her. I anticipated with dismay the period of her leaving town, which was fixed for the end of June, and viewed it as

the termination of my existence. Such was the morbid state of both my mind and body, that I considered it physically impossible for me to survive her loss. This passion far exceeded that which I formerly experienced, both in intensity and duration. The idea of my death, which was indelibly connected with our separation, rendered me so desperate that I acted like a man who had nothing farther to lose. The character of this woman, who delighted only in extremes, tended not a little to nourish this species of frenzy.

Among my horses I still preserved the one I had purchased at Spa. When I mounted him, I committed a thousand extravagant tricks, which even struck with astonishment the boldest horseman in England. I leaped over the thickest and highest hedges, the widest ditches, and every barrier that stood in my way and opposed my progress. On one of these days, when it was not permitted me to visit the retreat of my lady, while taking an airing with the Marquis of Caraccioli, I became suddenly seized with the whim of showing him what extraordinary feats my horse was capable of performing, and set off at full gallop with the intention of clearing a high gate near the public road. But as my head was distracted at the time, I did not manage the reins with sufficient dexterity, and we both came to the ground. On recovering my feet, it appeared to me I had received no injury; besides, my mad passion had augmented my courage, and it seemed as if I purposely sought every occasion of breaking my neck. The Marquis Caraccioli had in vain cried out to me to return, but I remained deaf to his entreaties; in short, I knew not what I did. Observing my horse about to escape, I ran up to him, and, laying hold of the reins, I vaulted on his back, and, spurring him furiously to-

wards the unlucky gate, he cleared it in a trice, thus regaining his own honor and mine.

This triumph was, however, but short-lived. I had scarcely proceeded a few paces, when a shivering pervaded my whole frame, and I experienced an excruciating pain in my left shoulder. My arm had been dislocated, and the collar-bone fractured. The pain progressively augmented, and, being able only to proceed at a slow pace, the road on returning appeared unusually tedious. A surgeon was immediately called in, who, after putting me to great pain, bandaged up my arm, and enjoined me to remain in bed. Those alone who have felt the dominion of a passion so ardent as mine can form an idea of my rage when I found myself confined to bed on the evening of the happy day which was fixed on for our second meeting. This accident occurred on a Saturday morning. Finding myself a little better on the next Tuesday evening, I went to the opera, where I found Prince Masserano and his lady. As they supposed I was hurt and confined to my chamber, they were not a little surprised to see me in no other respect ill than with my arm in a sling.

While apparently with an unruffled countenance, and an air of tranquillity, I listened to the music, and while my heart was agitated with a thousand different passions, I conceived I heard my name pronounced in a high tone by some one in the lobby. By a kind of mechanical impulse, I opened the box door, and immediately went out, shutting it after me. The first person I saw was the husband of my lady, who had been demanding admittance.

For a long time I had anticipated this meeting, which I rather wished than took means to avoid. On darting out of the box, I exclaimed: "Who inquires for

me?" "It is I," replied he; "I wish to speak with you." "Let us go; I am ready," said I, and without uttering another word we left the house.

It was about half past seven in the evening. During the long days of the summer the opera commences at six o'clock. From the Haymarket we took the road to St. James's Park; thence we adjourned to a field termed the Green Park, where, having sought a retired corner, we drew our swords. My antagonist observing my left arm in a sling, had the generosity to inquire whether that would not incapacitate me from fighting. I replied in the negative, and, thanking him for this mark of attention, immediately put myself on my guard. I was never a proficient in the use of the sword. I rushed on him contrary to all the rules of art, like a madman as I was, for in fact I wished to meet death at his hands. I knew not what I did, but I must have attacked him with all the energy of which I was capable, since after fighting for seven or eight minutes, the sun was behind me, which at the commencement shone directly in my eyes so as to prevent me seeing him. He must consequently in retiring have described a curve. I conceived that, as he only parried my blows, his aim was not to kill me, and that, if he did not fall under my arm, it was from my incapability and want of skill. At last, making a thrust, he wounded me between the elbow and the wrist, a circumstance of which he was the first to apprise me, for I myself was unconscious of it, and in fact the wound was but slight. He then lowered the point of his sword, and said he was satisfied, inquiring at the same time if I were so likewise. I replied that, as I was the aggressor, that rested solely with him. On this, sheathing his sword, an example which I followed, he immediately left the field.

When alone, I wished to ascertain the nature of my wound; and on examination discovered that the sleeve of my coat had been torn, but, not finding much pain and observing the effusion of blood only trifling, I conceived it was but a mere scratch. Not having the use of my left arm, I could not pull off my coat without assistance, and was therefore obliged to rest contented with binding up the wound in the best manner I was able with a handkerchief by means of my teeth, so as to diminish the loss of blood. Leaving the park, I hastened along Pall Mall, and reached the door of the opera-house an hour after I had quitted it.

Observing by the lights in the streets, that neither my hands nor dress were stained with blood, I unbound the handkerchief, and, feeling no pain, returned to Prince Masserano's box. On entering it, the prince inquired why I had retired so precipitately, and where I had been. Discovering from this that he had not overheard our discourse, I merely said I had recollected an appointment, and added nothing further. Notwithstanding my efforts to appear calm, my mind was dreadfully harassed by reflecting on the consequences of this affair, and particularly on the injury it might do to the woman I adored.

XI.

INVIGORATED by several hours of profound sleep, I had my wound dressed, and flew to the house of my lady. From the domestics whom we had employed to gain intelligence, we learned everything that passed in the house of her husband, which was only at a short distance, as I have before mentioned, from the one of which she was now an inmate. Though it appeared to me that

a divorce would terminate our misfortunes, though the father of the lady whom I had known for two years called to congratulate his daughter on having now made a choice, he was pleased to say, worthy of her; notwithstanding all these favorable appearances, I conceived I could discern on the beautiful face of my mistress a cloud which presaged a new calamity. She wept without ceasing, protesting every moment that she loved me beyond expression.

It may be readily conjectured what anxiety I suffered during the interval between Wednesday and Friday. On the morning of the last-mentioned day, I again implored my mistress to unfold the cause of her sorrow and sadness, and to explain what appeared to me enigmatical in her discourse. After a long preamble, occasionally interrupted by sobs and tears, she at length said she was unworthy of me, and that circumstances rendered our union impossible. . . . The details filled my soul with abhorrence. . . . I loaded her with execrations. Even now, after the lapse of twenty years, when I reflect on what I then suffered, my blood boils in my veins.

On my arrival in London, I learned that I was made the principal party in the process of divorce still pending, the husband having chosen to bring me forward in preference to my rival in this affair. I cannot sufficiently extol the conduct of this worthy husband. He neither wished to kill me when I was in his power, nor yet sought to extort from me the damages usually allowed by the law in such cases. If, instead of making me draw my sword, it had been his object to subject me to a pecuniary penalty, it would have greatly embarrassed my circumstances. This intrepid and generous man acted throughout the whole affair in a manner I

very little merited. As the fact was too evident to admit of a doubt, a divorce was obtained without my being under the necessity of appearing in court, and without any measures being taken to impede my departure from England.

XII.

AFTER the late events I could no more taste tranquillity when I every day beheld those objects which called up the recollection of my sufferings. All those who interested themselves in my concerns, and commiserated my fate, urged me to leave England. I accordingly took my departure about the end of June, and as in the distracted state of my mind I longed for the consolations of friendship, I instinctively thought of D'Acunha and Holland. Arriving at the Hague, I remained with him several weeks, carefully avoiding the society of every one else. He did everything in his power to assuage my sorrow, but my wound was too deep to admit of consolation. I felt my melancholy daily augmented, and imagining that the dissipation inseparable from incessant change of place, and the sight of new objects, could alone soothe my perturbed feelings, I resolved to proceed to Spain, the only European country I had not yet visited. With this view I took the road to Brussels, the sight of which aggravated my sorrow by the comparison which I drew between my first attachment in Holland and my recent adventure in England. Either absorbed in a reverie, delirious, or shedding tears in silence, I at length arrived, all alone, at Paris. This great capital, in the amusements of which I was not a partaker, was equally disagreeable to me now as formerly. Here I

remained, however, for a month, till the great heats began to abate, before entering Spain. I might, had I been so inclined, have obtained an introduction to the celebrated Jean Jacques Rousseau, through the medium of an Italian acquaintance, who lived in habits of intimacy with him, and who predicted that we should be mutually pleased with each other. I greatly esteemed Rousseau, but it was more on account of his upright and independent character than from his works, since the little I had read of them rather disgusted me, owing to the labor and affectation of sentiment evident throughout all the productions of this author. Nevertheless, as I possessed little curiosity, and still less accommodation to the foibles of others, and was equally proud and unbending as himself, without the same title to be so, I inclined not to embrace the offered introduction, the success of which was at least doubtful. Why seek the acquaintance of an odd and morose man, to whom I would have rendered ten coarse expressions for one; since by a kind of natural instinct, I always repaid with usury both evil and good.

Instead therefore of cultivating an intimacy with Rousseau, I formed what was much more interesting to me, an acquaintance with the works of the most celebrated characters in Italy, or perhaps in the world. I purchased during my stay in Paris a collection of the works of our most celebrated writers both in prose and verse, in thirty-six small handsome volumes. These became my constant companions, though I must confess I did not derive all the advantage from them which might naturally have been expected, during the two or three first years they remained in my possession, as I then had neither inclination nor opportunity for study. With respect to the Italian language, I had so totally

forgotten it, as to be scarcely capable of comprehending the least abstruse of our authors; but on occasionally opening some of my thirty-six volumes, I was much surprised to see such a list of poetasters and rhymers, bound up with our principal poets. So consummate indeed was my ignorance, that I knew not even the titles of the works of *Torrachionne*, *Morgante*, *Ricciardetto*, etc., poems which I have since regretted having spent so much time in perusing. The acquisition of this collection proved of most incalculable benefit to me; I never afterwards parted with these six fathers of our divine language, *Dante*, *Petrarch*, *Ariosto*, *Tasso*, *Boccaccio*, and *Machiavel*, in whom every excellence is concentrated.

To my eternal shame I had attained my twenty-second year without having read any of these classics, excepting a few portions of *Ariosto*, during my adolescence.

With such a powerful antidote against idleness and ennui, I departed for Spain about the middle of August. I passed through *Orleans*, *Tours*, *Poitiers*, *Bourdeaux*, and *Toulouse*, the most delightful and luxuriant part of France, without casting on it a single glance, and entered Spain by the way of *Perpignan*. *Barcelona* was the first city at which I stopped since my departure from Paris. During this journey I did nothing but weep in secret. I opened occasionally some of the volumes of my favorite *Montaigne*, which I had not looked into during the last twelve months; and this occupation gradually restored me to reason, and imparted to my mind a certain degree of fortitude and even consolation.

Before leaving Britain I had disposed of my whole stud, except the most beautiful animals, which I left

in charge of the Marquis Caraccioli; and as horses were become with me a necessary of existence, I purchased two a few days after my arrival at Barcelona. They were both of the Andalusian race, the one a noble animal, while the other, though somewhat smaller, was full of spirit. I had always longed to possess Spanish horses, but this desire had never till now been gratified; my heart therefore bounded with joy on becoming master of two of the most beautiful of their kind. My horses afforded me still more consolation than Montaigne. I reckoned on performing with them my journey through Spain, as the roads in this country are so extremely bad that it has hitherto been found impracticable to establish regular post-coaches: they can only travel short stages at a mule's pace.

A slight indisposition having compelled me to remain at Barcelona till the month of November, I endeavored with the aid of a Spanish grammar and dictionary to acquire a knowledge of this beautiful language, which is not a difficult task to an Italian. In a few days I began to comprehend and relish Don Quixote. It is true, indeed, my progress was much facilitated by having formerly perused this work in French.

I took the road to Saragossa and Madrid, and I gradually became accustomed to travel through desert tracts, from which it would have been difficult to extricate myself, had I not possessed youth, patience, and money. During the fifteen days which intervened from the time of my setting out till I reached Madrid, I was obliged to take up my abode in some of the half-civilized villages which lay in my route. This proved more irksome to me than even the want of post-roads;

besides, change of place always afforded me pleasure, while on the contrary I regarded inaction as the greatest curse.

I performed almost the whole of this journey on foot, with my Andalusian courser; which accompanied me like a faithful dog, and appeared to understand whatever was said to him. How great was my delight on being alone with him in the vast wilds of Arragon. I sent forward my domestics with the carriage, and followed them at a short distance. Elias, mounted on a very handsome mule, occasionally shot some hares, rabbits, and birds. He preceded me by several hours, and halted at midday and in the evening to prepare the game for my repast.

It was unfortunate for me, though perhaps fortunate for others, that I had at this time no means of expressing either my ideas or emotions in verse. The melancholy and moral reflections, the terrific and gay images of every hue, which the sight of these profound solitudes presented to my imagination, would certainly have inspired me with the desire of composing verses, had I known how to give expression to my ideas, and not been prepossessed with the notion that I should never succeed in writing either prose or verse. I spent my time in a reverie, weeping and laughing by turns, like an infant, without knowing why. This state of mind is termed poetic enthusiasm when it leads to the production of any work, but is justly regarded as folly when unproductive of fruit.

In this manner I proceeded to Madrid. The taste I had acquired for a wandering life tended not to overcome the indolence of my disposition. I remained only one month in the Spanish capital, and during that period did not form a single acquaintance, except

with a watchmaker who was lately returned from Holland, where he had been to acquire a knowledge of his art. This young Spaniard possessed much natural intelligence; he had seen something of the world, and felt for the tyranny which weighed so heavy on his native country. I must here relate a trait of brutality to which Elias had nearly fallen a victim. One evening when I had supped with the watchmaker, and just as we were about to rise from table, Elias entered to arrange my hair, as was customary with him, before going to bed. During this operation he stretched one of the hairs so as to give me pain, on which, without saying a word, I started up, seized a candlestick, and threw it at his head. He received the stroke on his right temple, and the blood spouted out with such violence as to cover the watchmaker, who sat at the opposite side of the table, which was very large. This young man, who had neither observed nor could conjecture that the stretching of a single hair beyond the rest could produce this sudden frenzy, justly concluded I had been seized with a fit of insanity, and he sprang forward in order to secure me. Before, however, he could effect his purpose, the undaunted Elias had fallen on me in order to avenge himself, which he was perfectly able to do, had I not by my uncommon agility freed myself from his grasp. This gave me time to seize my sword, which I drew and directed the point to his breast. Such was the fury of Elias that he would have rushed forward had not the young Spaniard interposed himself between us. In the mean time the noise had brought up the domestics belonging to the hotel, and we were separated.

Thus ended this tragi-comic affray, which was so disgraceful to me. After acquiring some degree of

calmness, I informed Elias that on his plucking my hair I found it impossible to restrain my rage. He assured me that it happened by accident, and unknown to him; and the Spaniard was at length convinced that I was not insane, but that I was far from being wise. I was so ashamed and humbled at my intemperate conduct that I said to Elias he would have done well had he killed me, and he was very capable to have done so; for though I myself am above the common size, yet he was much my superior in this respect, and was besides a man of extraordinary courage.

The wound in his temple was not deep, but it bled profusely; had I struck him a little higher, this man, to whom I was much attached, would certainly have fallen by my hand, and that for a *hair*. I was shocked at the brutal excess of passion into which I had fallen. Though Elias was somewhat calmed, he still appeared to retain a certain degree of resentment; yet I was not disposed to display towards him the smallest distrust.

Two hours after his wound was dressed I went to bed, leaving the door open, as usual, between my apartment and the chamber in which he slept; notwithstanding the remonstrance of the Spaniard, who pointed out to me the absurdity of putting vengeance in the power of a man whom I had so much irritated.

I said even aloud to Elias, who was already in bed, that he might kill me if he was so inclined during the night; and that I justly merited such a fate. But this brave man, who possessed as much elevation of soul as myself, took no other revenge for my outrageous conduct, except preserving for several years two hand-

kerchiefs stained with blood which had been bound round his head, and which he occasionally displayed to my view. It is necessary to be fully acquainted with the character and manners of the Piedmontese in order to comprehend the mixture of ferocity and generosity displayed on both sides in this affair.

When at a more mature age, I endeavored to discover the cause of this violent transport of rage, I became convinced that the trivial circumstance which gave rise to it was, so to speak, like the last drop poured into a vessel ready to run over. My irascible temper, which must have been rendered still more irritable by solitude and perpetual idleness, required only the slightest impulse to cause it to burst forth. Besides, I never lifted a hand against a domestic, as that would have been putting them on a level with myself. Neither did I ever employ a cane, nor any kind of weapon, in order to chastise them, though I frequently threw at them any movable that fell in my way, as many young people do, during the first ebullition of anger; yet I dare affirm that I would have approved, and even esteemed the domestic who should on such occasions have rendered me back the treatment he received, since I never punished them as a master, but only contended with them as one man with another.

Having lived like a bear at Madrid, I left it without having viewed any of those objects calculated to excite the curiosity of strangers. I neither visited the Escorial, Aranjuez, nor the palace, nor even saw the king himself. The chief reason of this extraordinary apathy was the coldness which prevailed between me and the Sardinian envoy. I had met this minister in London during his residence at the Court of St. James's, and we were mutually displeased with each other.

On arriving at Madrid, I learned that the court had removed to some one of the royal residences in the country, and I embraced the opportunity of the envoy's absence to leave a note at his house with a letter of recommendation, which I brought as a matter of course from the secretary of state. On his return from the country he called at my lodgings, but found me from home, and no means were afterwards taken on either side to promote a meeting. This circumstance contributed not a little to render my stay unpleasant. I left Madrid early in December, and, passing through Toledo and Badajoz, I took the road to Lisbon, where I arrived on the Christmas evening.

The appearance of this city, especially to those who, like me, approach it by the Tagus, is strikingly magnificent. It resembles that of Genoa, but is much more varied and extensive. Viewed at a certain distance, it truly enchanted me. My delight and astonishment, however, diminished as I approached the shore, and were quickly converted into melancholy and sorrow. As soon as I landed I observed in several streets vestiges of the earthquake, particularly in the lower part of the city, though fifteen years had elapsed since the occurrence of that dreadful and ever memorable catastrophe.

The short stay of five weeks which I made at Lisbon will be an epoch ever dear to my heart; for it was then I became acquainted with the Abbé Caluso, youngest brother to Count Valperga di Masino, at that time our minister at the Court of Portugal. This man, distinguished by his virtues, his character, and his knowledge, rendered the time I spent there extremely delightful. I dined with him every day at his brother's table, and again returned in order to pass

with him the long winter evenings, preferring his society to all the amusements the great world could afford. I never departed without having reaped some improvement. His attention and indulgence to me were beyond expression, and tended to diminish the shame I felt for my extreme ignorance, which must have been the more disgusting to him as he possessed the most profound knowledge on every subject. I had never before met with the same liberal treatment from men of letters, whose company always appeared insupportable to me, which can excite no surprise, as my ignorance was equal to my pride.

It was during one of these happy evenings that I experienced an enthusiastic love of poetry; but this spark was quickly extinguished, and disappeared for several years. The worthy Abbé read to me the sublime Ode to Fortune, by Guido, a poet of whose name I was then ignorant. Some stanzas of this ode, and especially those on Pompey, enchanted me. The delighted Abbé persuaded himself that I had been born a poet, and assured me with a little attention and study I should write very good verses; but this burst of rapture having passed away, I ceased to consider it possible, and thought no more on the subject. The friendship and society of this worthy man, of this living Montaigne, proved, however, of the greatest utility in tranquillizing my mind. I began to read and reflect more than I had done for the last eighteen months.

At the commencement of February I set out for Seville and Cadiz, impressed with the most lively friendship and profound esteem for the Abbé Caluso, whom I hoped again to meet at Turin. The climate of Seville, and the original Spanish countenance, which has been better preserved here than in any other part

of the kingdom, afforded me much pleasure. I have always preferred an original, though bad, to the best copy. The Spanish and Portuguese are, I believe, the only European nations who have retained their original manners; this is particularly observable among the lower classes. Though their good qualities be engulfed in an abyss of oppression and abuses of every kind, I am fully persuaded these people under a wise government might be led to perform the most brilliant actions, as they possess courage, perseverance, honor, sobriety, docility, patience, and elevation of mind.

I passed the carnival with some degree of happiness at Cadiz. On reaching Perpignan, I found my health in a bad state, but, taking post from this place, I suffered infinitely less during the remainder of my journey. The two places which pleased me best during this excursion were Cordova and Valentia. The whole of the latter kingdom, which I passed through about the end of March, presented to my view such a paradise of delights as brought to my mind the description of spring given by the poets. The environs, the walks, the rivulets, the site of the city of Valentia itself, the bright azure of the heavens, the purity and elasticity of the atmosphere, the women, whose sparkling eyes far outvie those of the ladies of Cadiz, all appeared to me truly romantic. The whole of this country appeared to my astonished view like fairyland, and left on my mind a more ardent desire to revisit it than any other country I had ever beheld.

On arriving the second time at Barcelona, I was so fatigued with travelling so slowly, that I at last resolved, though with the most lively regret, to part with my beautiful Andalusian horse. He had been ill-used during my last journey, and I could not resolve to fatigue

him any more by making him trot behind my carriage. My other horse had become lame between Cordova and Valentia, and as I did not wish to remain on the road till he recovered, I gave him to two very pretty daughters of my host, recommending to them to see him well-treated, and assuring them that he would sell for a considerable sum as soon as he was cured. As to my favorite Andalusian, I could not resolve to sell him, being from my nature a great enemy to every species of traffic; I therefore presented him to a French banker residing at Barcelona, with whom I had become acquainted during my first visit to this city.

I shall here recount a circumstance which serves to display the character of these money agents. I had in my possession three hundred Spanish doubloons, which the regulations at the custom-house on the frontiers would have rendered it difficult to carry along with me. After making a present of my horse to this banker, I inquired if he could favor me with a bill of exchange on Montpellier, through which I must necessarily pass. In order to evince his gratitude for my gift, he took my doubloons and gave me a bill, the interest of which he calculated to a day.

On arriving at Montpellier, I found that I was a loser of seven per cent. This conduct of the banker was certainly not necessary in order to fix my opinion respecting this class of men, whom I have always considered in the worst possible light. They imitate the manners of the nobles, and while from ostentation they entertain you at their tables, they rob you on the principles of trade in their counting-room; besides, they are always ready to take advantage of every public calamity.

Travelling as fast as gold and the whip could urge on the mules, I proceeded from Barcelona to Perpignan

in two days. Always anxious to push forward, I flew rather than travelled post from this place to Antibes, without stopping either at Narbonne, Montpellier, or Aix. From Antibes I instantly embarked for Genoa, where I remained three days in order to recover from my fatigue. I afterwards proceeded to Asti, where I stayed some time with my mother, and at length, after an absence of three years, arrived at Turin on the 5th of May, 1772.

XIII.

THOUGH in the eyes of others, as well as in my own, I had derived no advantage from my various travels, yet my ideas had certainly begun to expand, and my reasoning faculty to become stronger. Hence I did not receive very cordially my brother-in-law when he came to advise me to solicit some diplomatic employment. I told him I had seen enough of kings and their representatives; that it was impossible to esteem them; that I would not even represent the Great Mogul, and still less the King of Sardinia, one of the most petty European princes; that in my opinion, in a country governed like ours, an individual could only live on his fortune, if he possessed one, or otherwise embrace some laudable occupation by which he could secure to himself a happy independence. This discourse somewhat lengthened the countenance of my brother-in-law, who was a lord of the bedchamber. He never again spoke to me of any employment, and my ideas on this subject remained unchanged.

Behold me then, at twenty-three years of age, in possession of an ample fortune for a native of Piedmont, enjoying as much liberty as it was possible to do, having

acquired a knowledge, though imperfectly, of the moral and political world, by seeing different men and different countries; as much of a philosopher as was compatible with my years, and equally proud as ignorant. Hence it is easy to foresee that I had not yet run through the whole scale of errors, and that I had still many faults to commit before my impetuous, proud, and intolerant character would submit to the control of reason.

Toward the end of 1773 I took a splendid house in the Piazza di S. Carlo, at Turin. I furnished it with taste and luxury, but with some degree of singularity; and I began to lead a most agreeable and pleasant life, amid those friends who flocked round me in crowds. I again renewed my intimacy with my former young and foolish academic companions, among whom were ten or twelve whose characters more nearly assimilated with my own.

We established a permanent society, for which regulations were drawn up, tests prescribed, and various other mummeries similar to the craft of masonry. Those who offered themselves as candidates were either rejected or admitted by a majority of voices. The only object of our society, which met several times a week, was to amuse ourselves by supping together, and reasoning, or rather talking nonsense, on every subject which occurred.

These solemn sittings were most frequently held at my house, because it was handsomer and more spacious than those of my comrades, and because, as I was a bachelor and lived alone, we could enjoy greater freedom. Among these youths, who were descended from the first families in the city, some were rich, others poor; many of them had only moderate abilities, while others evinced the most consummate talents; many

possessed little humor, while others displayed the most brilliant wit; even several of them had received the very best education. Hence it is evident that I could claim no superiority over these my youthful companions, though I had seen more of the world than the whole of them put together; nor do I believe I would have been so inclined, had I even been entitled to do so. The laws that we established were discussed, not dictated; they were just and impartial. We had a throne erected, through an opening in which essays and papers of various kinds were deposited; the key was intrusted to the president, who was chosen every week, and whose duty it was to read all these productions. Some of them were extremely amusing, and not wholly destitute of humor. They were all anonymous, though we frequently conjectured the name of the author. It was a common misfortune, but particularly so to me, that all these writings abounded in French idioms. For my part I threw several into the throne, which occasioned great mirth in the assembly. They were generally on humorous subjects, interlarded with philosophy and numerous absurdities, and written in a style which, if not barbarous, was at least far from being perfect, but which passed with an auditory as little versed in the beauties of composition as myself. I recollect a fragment which I still preserve, descriptive of a scene in the Last Judgment. In it God is represented as demanding of the souls assembled before his judgment-seat an account of all their different actions, and several personages are introduced, who depict their own character. This trifle was received with great applause; they discovered in it much justness and strength of coloring, and named on the spot several of those alluded to in the different portraits.

This little essay convinced me that I could communicate my ideas in writing so as to produce some effect on others, and inspired me with the desire and a faint hope of producing some work which might secure to me literary immortality. Nothing, however, could be more vague than these ideas, since my total ignorance prevented me from putting such a design into execution. I possessed a kind of natural instinct for satire, and evinced great facility in holding up persons and things to ridicule. Notwithstanding my disposition to this species of writing, I contemned it at the bottom of my heart, being convinced that the short-lived success of such productions is rather imputable to malignity and envy, which always rejoice when others are attacked, than to the intrinsic merit of the satire itself.

I lived in a state of the most deplorable idleness, without having a moment to myself, or ever opening a book. It is not then wonderful that I again fell under the dominion of love, whose yoke was now much more disgraceful than formerly; and from which I only escaped by a violent fit of study with which I was fortunately seized, and which, never afterwards leaving me, preserved me from weariness, anxiety, and I may add even despair. I am certain, had I not stored my mind with useful knowledge before attaining my thirtieth year, I should either have become insane or committed suicide.

This third accession of love, though short, was truly extravagant. The new object of my attachment was a woman of distinguished birth, but older than I by nine or ten years. I first became acquainted with her on my entrance into life, during the period I remained in the academy; and I now lodged exactly opposite her house. The advances she made to me, my idleness,

and the state of my feelings, which perhaps resembled those of which Petrarch said with so much truth, —

“ So di che poco canape si allaccia
 Un’ anima gentil, quand’ ella è sola,
 E non è chi per lei difesa faccia ” ;

in short, Apollo, who inclined to lead me into the road of wisdom by this extraordinary route, all conspired, though I at first neither esteemed nor loved her, notwithstanding she was not destitute of beauty, to make me believe like a fool in the sincerity of that ardent attachment she professed for me, and I at length really loved her even to madness. Friends, amusements, even my favorite horses, were neglected. I remained continually by her side, discontented with my conduct, yet unable to leave her. In this wretched and vacillating state did I live, or, more properly speaking, vegetate, from the middle of 1773 till February, 1775, without reflecting on the consequences of this adventure, the termination of which proved at once so distressing and fortunate to me.

XIV.

TOWARDS the end of the year 1773 I was attacked by a severe malady, of so extraordinary a nature, that I jocularly observed to the wits, of whom there are not a few at Turin, that it seemed expressly made for me. It was ushered in by an almost incessant vomiting for thirty-six hours, and when my stomach had nothing more to reject, I was seized with so violent a hiccough that I could not even swallow a single drop of water. The physicians, dreading an inflammation,

ordered me to be bled in the foot; thereupon the efforts to vomit immediately ceased, but were succeeded by spasms so extremely violent, that I sometimes struck my head against the bolster of my bed, and at other times my feet and elbows against everything that came in my way. I could neither take drink nor food of any kind; whenever a cup or anything else was offered to me, such was the violence of the spasms, that it was dashed from the hand which presented it.

These attacks became still more severe. If any one attempted to hold me by mere force, though worn down by sickness, and emaciated by nearly four days' fasting, yet my muscles exerted energies of which they would have been wholly incapable in a state of health. I passed in this manner five whole days, during which I swallowed only twenty or thirty drops of water from the palm of the hand, and which I immediately rejected. At length, on the sixth day of my illness, I was put into a warm bath, composed of equal parts of oil and water. Here I was kept for six hours, after which my spasmodic paroxysms became much less severe. I was enjoined to persevere in the use of the same baths; and once deglutition was so far restored that I took a large draught of whey, and in a few days the complaint wholly disappeared. My long-continued abstinence, and the violence of the reaching, had been such as to produce a hollow between the two small bones composing the breast, of a dimension sufficient to admit a middle-sized egg being placed therein, and which has never since been obliterated.

This singular malady was the mere effect of the anguish, shame, and rage which constantly preyed on

my mind, when I reflected on my disgraceful mode of life. As I saw no means of escaping these soul-harrowing reflections, I often invoked death to come to my aid. On the fifth day of my illness, when I was in the greatest danger, one of my friends, a very worthy man, and somewhat older than myself, paid me a visit, in order to induce me to confess, and make my will. Before he uttered a word on the subject, I readily divined from his manner and appearance the reason of his visit. I immediately anticipated him, and without being in the least ruffled, gave orders that a priest and notary should be sent for.

During my youth, when twice or thrice threatened with death, I never felt myself appalled; I know not whether I shall act with equal fortitude when the hour of my dissolution approaches. In fact, no man's character can be fairly appreciated till after death.

My health being re-established, I unfortunately resumed the fetters of love, but I had at least the courage to cast off those which my being in a military capacity imposed on me. The trade of arms and the life of a soldier were never conformable to my character; but I relished them still less in a country where liberty and freedom are altogether unknown. I waited upon the colonel, and under the plea of bad health, requested leave to quit the service, to the duty of which I had in reality never been subjected. Of the eight years during which I wore the uniform, I spent five in foreign countries; and during the three others, I had been merely present at four reviews, two of which were only performed yearly in the provincial militia regiments in which I served. The colonel advised me to reflect seriously on the step, before he should notify my resignation to the court.

Though firmly fixed in my determination, I yet out of mere politeness replied that I acquiesced in his opinion, and would take a week or two longer to reconsider the subject. At the expiration of this time I again sent in my resignation, which was accepted.

Thus I dragged on a weary existence, ashamed of myself, and shunning the society of all my acquaintances and friends. To my vivid imagination it appeared that my opprobrium was depicted in their countenances. . . . One day I began to scribble at random, and without any determinate plan, the scene of a piece which I know not whether to consider as belonging to tragedy or comedy. It was written in the form of a dialogue between a man whom I denominated Photin, a woman, and a Cleopatra, who enters some time after the other interlocutors. I bestowed on the other female the appellation of Lachesis, without recollecting that it was the name given by the ancients to one of the Fates.

When I now reflect on this attempt, it appears to me so much the more extraordinary, as for five or six years I had not only never written a single line of Italian, but never even opened a book of any kind, except very rarely, and that at long intervals. Thus, I cannot say how or why, I was impelled to write these scenes in Italian, and in verse. When I began to sketch this piece I had no other reason to prefer the name of Cleopatra to that of Berenice, Zenobia, or of any other heroic queen, except it was from being in the constant habit of viewing the superb tapestries in the antechamber of my lady, upon which was represented the history of Mark Antony and Cleopatra. I placed them under the cushion of her sofa, where they remained a whole year without any one suspecting it.

Disgusted, and even irritated at myself for the in-

glorious life which I led, I took, in the month of May, 1774, the sudden resolution of visiting Rome, in order to try if travelling and absence might not cure me of my passion. I therefore availed myself of one of those violent disputes which very frequently occurred between me and my lady, and so without saying a word respecting my intention, returned home in the evening, and immediately began to make the necessary preparation for my journey, and on the morning of the second day set out for Milan.

I did not visit her during this interval, but, having probably learned my design from some of my domestics, she returned me my letters and portrait, as is customary on similar occasions, on the evening previous to my departure. Though this occurrence produced some agitation in my mind, and made me waver in my resolution, I nevertheless assumed sufficient courage to set out on my journey. Incessantly haunted by this truly pitiable passion, I had scarcely reached Novara, when cowardice, sorrow, and regret, triumphing over reason, again took possession of my mind, and overturned my purpose. I sent forward my carriage and servants to Milan, requesting the French Abbé, whom I had taken as a travelling companion, to wait for me in that city, where I would rejoin him. Taking a postilion for my guide, I set out about midnight on my return, and reached Turin at day-break. Not daring to enter the city, lest I should render myself the laughing-stock of all my acquaintances, I stopped at a wretched inn in the suburbs, and from thence wrote a very penitential letter to my lady, very humbly craving that she would grant my pardon, and vouchsafe me an audience. I waited not long for her answer. My faithful Elias, who never

failed on any occasion to palliate my faults, and who had been left behind to superintend my concerns at Turin during my absence, brought me this answer. My lady having thus acquiesced in the prayer of my petition, I entered the city by night, disguised like a vagabond, and obtained my ignominious pardon. Before again setting out for Milan, which I did at an early hour in the morning, it was agreed between us that I should return to Turin, in five or six weeks, under pretence of ill-health. Alternately rational and imbecile, I had scarcely set out, on peace being sealed, than I felt ashamed of my unsteady and wavering conduct. I thus reached Milan, tormented by the most poignant regrets, and in a state of mind calculated equally to excite pity and contempt. I knew not then what experience has since taught me, the truth of the following sentiment of the divine Petrarch: —

“Che chi discerne è vinto da chi vuole.”

I remained only two days at Milan, during which I was solely occupied in musing whether I ought to shorten my inauspicious journey, or whether I might not contrive to prolong it without failing in the promise I had given to my lady.

Insupportable as were my chains, I had neither the will nor power to break them asunder. Finding solace only in travelling and continual dissipation, I passed rapidly through Modena and Bologna, and repaired to Florence. I remained only two days in this latter city, and again set out for Pisa and Leghorn, where I received letters from my lady, and unable any longer to suffer the torments of absence, I took the road by Lerici. Leaving Genoa, the Abbé, and my carriage, which stood in need of repairs, I travelled

post, and reached Turin eighteen days after setting out on a journey which was to occupy one year. I entered the city as before by night, in order to avoid the jests of my companions, — thus terminated this ridiculous excursion, which cost me many a bitter tear.

Under the ægis, not of my conscience, which stung me to the quick, but of my solemn and inanimate countenance, I escaped the sarcasms of my friends and acquaintances, who ventured not to approach me with congratulations on my return. In fact, this return was extremely unfortunate for me; because, contemptible in my own eyes, I fell into such a state of melancholy as would, if long continued, inevitably have led to insanity or death.

I continued to wear my disgraceful fetters till toward the end of January, 1775, when my rage, which had hitherto so often been restrained within bounds, broke forth with the greatest violence.

XV.

ON returning one evening from the opera, the most insipid and tiresome amusement in Italy, where I had passed several hours in the box of the woman who was by turns the object of my antipathy and my love, I took the firm determination of emancipating myself forever from her yoke. Experience had taught me that flight, so far from enabling me to persevere in my resolutions, tended, on the contrary, to weaken, and even to destroy them; I was inclined, therefore, to subject myself to a still more severe trial, imagining, from the obstinacy and peculiarity of my character, that I should succeed most certainly by the adoption of such measures as would compel me to make the great-

est efforts. I determined never to leave the house, which, as I have already said, was exactly opposite that of this lady; to gaze at her windows, to see her go in and out every day, to listen to the sound of her voice, though firmly resolved that no advances on her part either direct or indirect, no tender remembrances, nor, in short, any other means which might be employed, should ever again tempt me to a renewal of our friendship. I was determined to die or liberate myself from my disgraceful thralldom. In order to give stability to my purpose, and to render it impossible for me to waver without the imputation of dishonor, I communicated my determination to one of my friends, who was greatly attached to me, and whom I highly esteemed. He had lamented the state of mind into which I had fallen, but, not wishing to give countenance to my conduct, and seeing the impossibility of inducing me to abandon it, he had for some time ceased to visit at my house. In the few lines which I addressed to him, I briefly stated the resolution I had adopted, and as a pledge of my constancy I sent him a long tress of my ugly red hair. I had purposely caused it to be cut off in order to prevent my going out, as no one but clowns and sailors appeared in public with short hair. I concluded my billet by conjuring him to strengthen and aid my fortitude by his presence and example. Isolated, in this manner, in my own house, I prohibited all species of intercourse, and passed the first fifteen days in uttering the most frightful lamentations and groans. Some of my friends came to visit me, and appeared to commiserate my situation, perhaps because I did not myself complain; but my figure and whole appearance bespoke my sufferings. Wishing to read something, I had recourse to the Ga-

zettes, whole pages of which I frequently ran over without understanding a single word. I rode out on horseback in the most solitary places, and it was the only exercise which proved salutary either to my mind or body. I passed more than two months, till the end of March, 1775, in a state almost bordering on frenzy. About this period a new idea darted into my mind, which tended to assuage my melancholy. Reflecting one day on the amusement I might derive from poetry, I succeeded with the greatest difficulty, and at different times, in composing fourteen verses, which I denominated a sonnet, and which I was anxious to send to the amiable Father Paciaudi. He sometimes visited at my house, and had always shown the greatest kindness towards me, without, however, dissembling his sorrow at seeing me wasting my time in a state of total inactivity. This worthy man had incessantly exhorted me to undertake a course of Italian reading. He had one day picked up at an old book-stall the *Cleopatra* of Cardinal Delfino, which he called sublime, and, recollecting to have heard me say that it was a tragic subject, and one that I should like to attempt, though I had never shown him my first essay, of which I have spoken above, he presented it to me. In one of my lucid intervals I had the patience to peruse the whole of this piece, and write marginal notes on it. I returned it, fully persuaded that in respect to the plot, and the management of the passions, it was much inferior to mine, if I had finished it according to my original plan. Not to discourage me, Father Paciaudi imputed merit to my sonnet it did not possess; but some months afterwards, on becoming acquainted with our best poets, I learned to estimate this piece at its real value, which amounted to — nothing. I was greatly indebted,

however, to the undeserved praises of the good father, which were bestowed with so much benevolence, since they encouraged me to persevere till I became more worthy of them.

Several days before my late rupture with my lady, I had drawn my piece from under the pillow of her sofa, where it had lain for a whole year. It happened that in one of these hours of solitude and constant irritation, I cast my eyes upon it. Astonished at the resemblance between the state of my heart and Antony's, I said to myself: "This piece must be finished: it must be re-touched; it cannot remain as it is: the passion which consumes me must be depicted; and it may be performed by the comedians who annually visit this place during spring."

No sooner had this idea passed through my mind, than, forgetting my passion, I began to scribble, to alter, to read, and re-alter, and, in short, to become a fool, in another manner, for this unfortunate Cleopatra, born under such unhappy auspices. I was not ashamed to consult some of my friends, who had not like myself neglected to cultivate the Italian language and Italian poetry. I wearied all those who could give me any advice, or throw any light upon an art to which I was so great a stranger. In this manner, wishing for nothing but to learn and make some progress in such a bold and hazardous career, my house became gradually changed into a species of academy. On acquiring a wish for knowledge, circumstances had conspired to render me docile; but my natural obstinacy returning, I became less attentive to the instructions which were given me. I wearied myself and others without deriving the smallest advantage from them. The only good that occurred to me from this new whim was,

that of gradually detaching me from love, and of awakening my reason, which had so long lain dormant. I no longer found it necessary to cause myself to be tied with cords to a chair, in order to prevent me from leaving my house and returning to that of my lady. This had been one of the expedients I devised to render myself wise by force. The cords were concealed under a large mantle, in which I was enveloped, and only one hand remained at liberty.

Of all those who came to see me, not one suspected I was bound down in this manner. I remained in this situation for whole hours; Elias, who was my jailer, was alone intrusted with the secret. He always liberated me, as he had been enjoined, whenever the paroxysms of my rage subsided. Of all the whimsical methods, however, which I employed, the most curious was that of appearing in masquerade at the theatre towards the end of the carnival. Habited as Apollo, I ventured to present myself with a lyre, on which I played as well as I was able, and sang some bad verses of my own composing. Such effrontery was diametrically opposite to my natural character. The only excuse I can offer for similar scenes was my inability to resist an imperious passion. I felt that it was necessary to place an insuperable barrier between its object and me; and I saw that the strongest of all was the shame to which I should expose myself by renewing an attachment which I had so publicly turned into ridicule. Thus the dread of this shame prevented me from perceiving that I was already overwhelmed with it in public. Nevertheless, I felt myself gradually animated by a passion hitherto wholly unknown to me, the love of glory.

In short, after several months' constant poetical con-

sultations, after having ransacked grammars and dictionaries, after having strung together a great deal of nonsense, I collected five pieces, which I termed acts, and entitled the whole a tragedy. As soon as the first act was ready, instead of throwing it into the fire, I sent it to the polite Father Paciaudi, requesting him to examine it, and give me his opinion in writing. The notes which he made on these verses were really amusing; and I laughed at them in good earnest, though at my own expense; and among others, at the following (verse 184), "The barking of the heart." "This metaphor," he observes, "reminds one of a dog; I entreat you to expunge it." The notes which he made on the first act, and the advice which he gave me in the letter which he sent on returning it, induced me to digest it anew with the most indefatigable patience. From this labor sprang the tragedy of Cleopatra, which was represented at Turin the 16th of June, 1775.

I also composed a small piece in prose, to be performed after Cleopatra, and which I entitled "The Poets." Nevertheless, neither the small piece nor the tragedy, with all their defects, was the offspring of a fool; some marks of genius were discoverable in both.

In the Poets I depicted myself under the name of Zeuzippe, and in this assumed character first satirized my Cleopatra; I invoked her shade, in order that she might, in company with the other tragic heroines, decide on the merits of my piece, which was equally bad as that of my rival poets. The sole difference which existed between their pieces and mine was that the former were the productions of learned incapacity, whereas mine was the premature offspring of ignorance, which promised one day to become something.

These two pieces were represented two successive

nights; but, repenting that I had so rashly appeared before the public, though it was very indulgent, I used every effort with the managers to prevent them being again represented. From that eventful night a devouring fire took possession of my soul; I thirsted one day to become a deserving candidate for theatrical fame; the passion of love never inspired me with such lively transports. Such was the manner in which I first appeared before the public. If my numerous dramatic works are not found to be superior to those two first productions of my pen, this ascent to Parnassus in the sock and buskin must doubtless be considered as a piece of folly highly extravagant and ridiculous; but if, on the contrary, I am deemed worthy to rank among our celebrated tragic or comic authors, this first step must be regarded as the most important of my whole life.

I shall here terminate the epoch of my youth. My manhood could not commence under happier auspices.



FOURTH EPOCH.

MANHOOD.

COMPREHENDING MORE THAN THIRTY YEARS OF MY
LITERARY LABORS.

I.

THUS, then, at twenty-seven years of age did I enlist myself in the service of the Muses, and appear before the public as a dramatic author. I shall now proceed to point out the resources I possessed to enable me to support so daring and presumptuous a flight.

A resolute, obstinate, and ungovernable character, susceptible of the warmest affections, among which, by an odd kind of combination, predominated the most ardent love, and a hatred approaching to madness against every species of tyranny; an imperfect and vague recollection of several French tragedies which I had seen represented several years before, but which I had then neither read nor studied; a total ignorance of dramatic rules; and an incapability of expressing myself with elegance and precision in my own language. To these were superadded an insufferable presumption, or, more properly speaking, petulance, and a

degree of violence which seldom allowed me to investigate and perceive truth.

With similar elements it would have been easier to have formed a tyrannical prince than a man of letters. At length a powerful voice arose from the bottom of my heart which cried more energetically than that of my few friends: "It is necessary to retrace your steps in order to study grammar and the art of composition." In conformity to this divine and powerful admonition, I at length submitted to the hard necessity of recommencing the studies of my infancy at an age when I thought and felt like a man. But the flame of glory shone in my eyes, and, resolving to wipe away the shame of my deplorable ignorance, I assumed sufficient courage to combat and overcome every obstacle which opposed my progress.

The representation of Cleopatra had not only convinced me that the subject was intrinsically bad, and would never be selected by any one except an ignorant author, but made me perceive the immense space I had to traverse before I could regain the barrier, re-enter the lists, and dart forward with more or less chance of success towards the goal. As soon, however, as the veil which obscured my sight was withdrawn, I solemnly vowed, in my own mind, neither to spare trouble nor fatigue, in order to render myself an equal proficient in my native tongue with the most learned philologist in Italy. I assumed this resolution, because I conceived if I once acquired a felicity of expression, I should never experience any difficulties from a poverty of imagination or a paucity of ideas. Having thus bound myself by an oath, I resolutely plunged, with the courage of a Curtius, into the abyss of grammar. In proportion as I became convinced that I had exe-

cuted badly what I had hitherto done, the more firmly did I believe it was in my power to perform it better. I had in my opinion a striking proof of this in my two tragedies, Filippo and Polinice, which I had written in French prose three months before the representation of Cleopatra. These I had read to some of my friends, who appeared to be much struck with them. I was led to form this opinion not so much from the quantum of praise which they bestowed on them as from the profound attention with which they listened from the beginning to the end of the performance. Their silent agitation and the expression of their features spoke even more highly in my favor than their words. Unfortunately, however, whatever might be the merit of these two tragedies, they were written in French prose, and much labor was requisite to transform them into Italian poetry. I had sketched them in this meagre and unpleasing language, not that I knew it, or even pretended to know it, but because during my five years' travels it was the only language I heard spoken, and because I explained myself in it better than in any other. By my ignorance of language I bore a striking resemblance to one of those noted couriers of Italy, who, when sick in bed, dreams that he runs, and wants only his limbs to surpass his rivals.

The difficulty of explaining or translating my sentiments either into Italian verse or prose was such, that when I read in this language an act or scene which appeared to delight my auditors in French, they no longer knew it to be the same, and inquired the reason of the change. Such was the influence of other dresses and decorations, that the same figure was insupportable, and incapable of being recognized. I raged, I wept, but it was necessary to assume patience, and begin my

task anew. I was obliged to ransack classical productions, however insipid and anti-tragical, in order to become master of the native Tuscan. In short, it behoved me wholly to forget what I had hitherto learned in order to acquire it.

The fate of these two tragedies made me lend a more patient ear to the judicious counsels which I received, from every quarter, and induced me to be present, however painful it might be to my feelings, at the representation of *Cleopatra*. Every verse the actors pronounced resounded in my ears, as the most severe criticism on a work that from this moment lost all interest in my eyes. Henceforward I considered it only as affording a stimulus to future exertions.

I did not allow myself to be influenced by the severe criticisms directed against my tragedies, when I published the first edition of my *Cleopatra* at Siena in 1783. But neither did I any longer pride myself on the unmerited praises which the pit at Turin, pleased perhaps with my youthful tenacity, seemed so well inclined to bestow on me. Though from the commencement of July, 1803, in order to avoid conversing in the French language, I religiously shunned every society in which it was spoken, yet I did not succeed in Italianizing myself. I could never accommodate my mind to progressive and regular study; always acting in opposition to prudent advice, I inclined to soar anew on my own pinions. On this account I forced myself to versify every subject that occurred to my mind. Various were the species of poetry I attempted. But though my pride was uniformly humbled, yet obstinacy and hope still stimulated me to persevere. Among other rhapsodies, for they deserve not the name of poetry, I wrote some couplets, which I sang at a meet-

ing of Freemasons. They were full of allusions to the insignia, different orders, etc. of the society. Though I had already pilfered one verse from Petrarch in my first sonnet, yet such were my ignorance and inattention that I began this piece without recollecting the rules prescribed in such compositions, which I had perhaps never well understood. I continued in this error till I reached the twelfth stanza, when, some doubts suggesting themselves, I opened Dante and discovered my fault, which I avoided in the sequel of the piece, leaving, however, the others as they originally stood. In this state they were sung at the lodge, but these Masons, being as little proficient in poetry as in the art of building, did not perceive their defects.

Finding during the month of August, 1775, that the dissipated life to which I was exposed in the city prevented me from devoting myself entirely to study, I retired to the mountainous district situated between Piedmont and Dauphiné. I spent nearly two months at Cezannes, a small village at the foot of Mont Génèvre, by which, according to some, Hannibal pursued his way in scaling the Alps. Though naturally much given to reflection, I was yet sometimes imprudent through an impetuosity of temper. Hence it did not occur to me, on assuming this determination, that I should again encounter in my retreat among these mountains that same detestable French language which I wished so much to avoid. The idea of thus secluding myself was suggested by the same Abbé who had been my travelling companion in my last ridiculous journey to Florence.

This Abbé was a native of Cezannes, possessed much wit, a benevolent disposition, and was well versed in Latin and French literature. He had acted as a pre-

ceptor to two of my companions at college, where we contracted a lasting friendship for each other. At that period the Abbé sought to inspire me with a thirst for knowledge, but his efforts were fruitless.

Such, when I inhabited the first apartment of the academy, was the indifference I evinced to become a dramatic author. It must be confessed, that ever afterwards the monotonous and insipid cadence of French verses always disgusted me. I never could consider them in the light of poetry, either in the days of my ignorance, or when I conceived myself better acquainted with the subject.

But to return to my summer retreat at Cezannes. Besides my literary Abbé, a musical Abbé accompanied me, who gave me lessons on the guitar. But though I had a great predilection for this instrument, whose sounds excited in my mind the most rapturous transports, and inspired me with a taste for poetry, yet I never had the patience to cultivate it. Neither did I excel on the harpsichord, which I was taught in my youth, though I possessed an ardent imagination, and an exquisite ear for music.

Thus did I pass the summer in the society of these two Abbés. While one of them occasionally relieved my mind by the concord of sweet sounds from the pain occasioned by my application to study, I wished the other at the devil with his French. Notwithstanding this, I spent my time in a way at once profitable and delightful. I learned to retire within myself, and to labor with energy in rubbing off the rust which my mind had contracted during ten years of disgraceful torpor and inactivity. I began to translate into Italian prose Filippo and Polinice, which had originally been written in a pseudo-tongue. Notwithstanding all my

efforts, however, these two tragedies always exhibited a mongrel appearance of Italian and French, as is affirmed by our poet of burning paper :—

“ Un color bruno
Che non è nero ancora e il bianco muore.”

Wholly occupied with this painful labor of converting French conceptions into Italian verse, I felt myself excessively fatigued by remoulding my *Cleopatra* for the third time. I had read some of the scenes of this piece in French to Count Tana, my dramatic but ungrammatical censor, who considered some of them very beautiful and energetic, particularly that between Augustus and Antony. When, however, they were transformed into bad Italian verse, he viewed them very differently, regarding them as even beneath mediocrity. This he candidly told me, and I believed him, nay, I even felt it myself; so true is it that in poetic composition style constitutes half its value, and sometimes, as in lyric poetry, even the whole. So that some verses which,

“ Col la lor vanità che par persona,”

are above others,

“ Fossor gemme legate in vile anello.”

After translating my two tragedies into wretched prose, I next began to read and study, in the order of their antiquity, all our most celebrated poets. Instead of writing marginal notes, I merely contented myself with making small perpendicular strokes opposite those passages with which I was most delighted. As I found Dante at first too abstruse, I quitted him for Tasso, which till then I had never opened. I read this author with such attention, and so anxious was I

to unravel his meaning, that I often felt myself more exhausted before getting through ten stanzas than if I had composed them myself.

Gradually, however, I became habituated to this laborious mode of study. In this manner did I toil through the Jerusalem of Tasso, the Orlando Furioso of Ariosto, afterwards Dante, and at length Petrarch, in all of which I wrote marginal notes during my progress. I spent more than one year in this labor. When I met with any difficulty in Dante, I gave myself little trouble to understand him, if it related to a mere point of history; when, however, it regarded an expression, a sentiment, or the turn of a sentence, I essayed with all my strength to comprehend him. On such occasions, when success attended my attempts, I felt myself not a little gratified. As soon as I had read these four great poets, I immediately prepared myself, by subsequent readings, to comprehend them thoroughly, and enter into their spirit, — an undertaking to which I was probably stimulated by the idea of one day successfully imitating them. Petrarch seemed more difficult to comprehend than Dante, and at first afforded me less gratification, since we never receive much pleasure in reading poetical pieces which we do not readily understand. As I wished to write in blank verse, I hunted after the best models. I was advised to peruse the translation of Statius by Bentivoglio; but though I attentively studied this work, and wrote marginal notes as I proceeded, yet the structure of the verse seemed to me to be feeble and ill adapted for tragic dialogue. The Ossian of Cesarotti was the next work recommended to me by my censors and friends. This work attracted my notice, and I conceived that with a slight modification it would serve

as an excellent model for colloquial verse. I likewise wished to read some Italian tragedies, either written originally in this language, or translated from the French. From these I hoped to derive some improvement, at least with respect to style, but I soon became disgusted with their length, with the prolixity of the sentences, and the construction of the verse, not to mention the poverty displayed in the conceptions throughout. Among the least exceptionable, I read the four tragedies which Paradisi translated from the French, and to which he subjoined notes as well as to the Merope of Maffei. The style of this last production pleased me much, particularly in some places, though, according to the standard I had erected in my own mind, it was far from having attained perfection. I inquired of myself: "How happens it that our divine language, which appears so bold, and even sometimes so energetical and sublime in Dante, should become languid and effeminate in dramatic dialogue? Why happens it that the versification of Cesarotti, which is so nervous in his Ossian, should become so prosaic and diffuse in Semiramis and the Mahomet of Voltaire? Why, moreover, does it happen that the pompous Frugoni, in his translation of the Rhadamiste of Crebillon, falls so much beneath his author, and even himself? Certainly the fault cannot be justly imputed to our language, which is so copious and flexible. When I suggested these doubts to my arbiters and friends, they were unable to answer me. The worthy Paciaudi recommended to me, however, in my laborious studies, not to neglect prose, which he learnedly termed the nurse of verse. I remember that one day having brought me the Galatea of Casa, he advised me to study it with care, and particularly to attend to

the turn of the style, which was the purest Tuscan. Though I read it, like most others, during my youth, without comprehending or perceiving its beauties, yet I felt my pride piqued by this scholastic injunction. I opened it, however, though with the greatest repugnance; but no sooner had I read the very first sentence, which equally disgusted me by its pomposity and insignificance, than I flung the book in a rage out of the window, exclaiming like a fool: "What an insufferable hardship, if in order to write tragedies I must, at the age of twenty-seven, be condemned to read such stuff, and harass my brain with such trifling absurdities!" Father Paciaudi only smiled at my absurd warmth, and predicted, notwithstanding, that at some future period I should give it more than one perusal. Just so it fell out, several years afterwards, when my mind had become more habituated to philological criticism; not only did I read the *Galatea*, and write notes on it, but also on all our other prose writers of the fourteenth century. The fact is, that he who carefully reads these works, and attends to the style in which they are written, separating the ore from the dross in his progress, will be enabled to impart to the style of his own productions, of whatever nature they may be, a richness, a conciseness, a simplicity, and a strength of coloring, not to be found in any of the works of the present times. Probably few will be found to undertake such a laborious task, who possess sufficient spirit and capacity to derive advantage from it; while those who possess not these qualities would attempt it in vain.

II.

HAVING devoted myself during six months to the study of Italian literature, I began, about the commencement of 1776, to experience an emotion of grief and shame that I had entirely forgotten the little Latin I had acquired in the early part of my life. So great indeed was my ignorance of this language, that when I met in the course of my reading even with the shortest and most common quotations, I was compelled to pass over them. Having besides prohibited myself the use of French authors, and confined my studies to Italian alone, I was thus deprived of all aid in reading dramatic works. For these and other reasons I was induced again to direct my attention to the study of the Latin tongue, in order to enable me to read the tragedies of Seneca, some detached portions of which had enchanted me with their sublimity. I, moreover, felt an inclination to read the Latin translations of the Greek tragedies, which are superior in every respect to the Italian version. After arming myself with fortitude, I engaged an excellent instructor, who put into my hands the fables of Phædrus, which, to his great astonishment and my shame, he soon perceived I did not understand, though I had explained them when only ten years of age. In fact, I wholly mistook the sense, whenever I attempted to render them into Italian. As soon as my instructor discovered the quantum of my ignorance, and knew the firmness of my resolution, he exchanged Phædrus for Horace, observing: "From the difficult we will descend to that which is more easy, and this first task will be more worthy of you; let us commit trespasses

against the prince of lyric poets, in order that he may render others more intelligible to us."

In this way we entered on Horace, and from the beginning of January till the month of March, by dint of perseverance, after much guessing and blundering, I succeeded in rendering myself capable of understanding all the odes of this poet. This study cost me much labor, but it also proved of the greatest utility, since it improved me in a knowledge of grammar without compelling me to relinquish the study of poetry. During this period I unceasingly pursued the study of the Italian poets. Besides those of the first rank, and especially Dante and Petrarch, which I read five times over in the space of four years, constantly writing notes on them during my progress, I likewise perused others, such as Politian and Casa. I occasionally made some attempts in dramatic poetry, and had already metamorphosed my tragedy of Filippo into verse. Though this piece was much superior to that of Cleopatra, the versification was yet languid, feeble, and prolix. I had reduced it from two thousand to fourteen hundred verses; still, however, the public were disgusted with its prolixity, though it was certainly rendered, by being thus compressed, much more energetic and comprehensive than as it stood in the original manuscript.

The languor and feebleness of my style made me readily perceive that I should never succeed in expressing myself happily in Italian, while I continued to translate my own works from the French. I took in consequence the resolution of travelling into Tuscany, with a view to improve myself in the Tuscan style. I set out with this intention in the month of April, 1776, hoping that a stay of six months would serve to un-

frenchify me. I soon, however, found that this period would be insufficient to destroy a habit which had been rooted in my mind for upwards of ten years. Encumbered with very little baggage, and attended only by a small retinue, I pursued my route by the way of Parma and Placentia. Animated by the hope of acquiring future fame, with an edition of my favorite poets in my pocket, I travelled only by short stages, sometimes in my carriage, and at other times on horseback. Father Paciaudi introduced me, while at Parma, Modena, and in Tuscany, to almost every individual who possessed any degree of reputation in the republic of letters. I now courted their company as much as I had shunned it formerly. At Parma I became acquainted with the celebrated Bodoni, and it was at this place I first saw a printing apparatus. Though I had visited both Madrid and Birmingham, which could boast of containing two of the most celebrated printing-presses in Europe, I had never seen a single type, nor any of the other utensils which were destined either to exalt or lower me in the estimation of posterity. I could not certainly have viewed a finer establishment than that which I here saw, nor could I have met with a man more amiable and intelligent than Bodoni. He gave me all the information I could wish respecting an art which he has contributed so much to bring to perfection.

I thus every day continued to emerge from the long and profound lethargy in which I had been plunged; I saw many things, and acquired much knowledge, though it must be confessed somewhat too late. What appeared to me most important was, to ascertain the exact measure of my intellectual faculties, in order that I might not deceive myself with respect to the

species of literature which it behoved me to cultivate. This study of myself was not, however, so new to me as many others; for I had accustomed myself at an early period not only to reflect much, but frequently even to commit my reflections to writing. I still retain in my possession a kind of diary, which I regularly continued for several months; in which I noted down not only my habitual follies, but even my thoughts, and the motives of my actions. This, while it served as a mirror to reflect my faults, enabled me at the same time to discover how I might rectify them.

I had begun this journal in French, but I afterwards continued it in Italian. It was ill-written in both languages, though it certainly displayed many striking traits of originality. I soon, however, became weary of it, and I did well, for besides wasting my time and my ink, I found it became of less use to me every day. I mention this fact as a proof of the power I possessed of discovering my literary capacity or incapacity on any subject. Being once able to distinguish what I wanted from the little I inherited from nature, I proceeded still a step farther, in order to discriminate among the qualities in which I was deficient, those it would be possible fully or only partially to acquire, and those, in short, which were unattainable by me. If I derived not complete success from this kind of study, I at least owe to it my never having attempted any species of composition to which I felt not a natural and irresistible impulse, — an impulse which, in the fine arts, even when the work is not wholly successful, is readily distinguished from coercive efforts, though these may sometimes produce a work regular in all its parts.

During the six or seven weeks I resided at Pisa, I conceived the plan of my tragedy of *Antigone*, which

I wrote in very tolerable Tuscan prose. I transformed Polinice into verse, which was much superior to that of Filippo. I read the first of these pieces to some of the professors of the university. They appeared to be very well satisfied with it, only censuring occasionally a few expressions, but without criticising it with that severity it deserved. Though the conceptions and versification were in a few detached portions far from being unhappy, yet the piece as a whole, in my opinion, was too languid and insipid to excite much interest; according to them, however, the style was sometimes incorrect, though smooth and sonorous; in short, so completely were our opinions at variance, that what I called languid and insipid they termed smooth and sonorous. With respect to the incorrectness of the style, this was a mere matter of fact and not of taste, and therefore could afford no cause for dispute.

During my stay at Pisa I executed a literal translation in prose of Horace's Art of Poetry, that I might familiarize myself with his excellent and ingenious precepts. I likewise began to read Seneca's tragedies; but though I perceived they were written in opposition to the rules of Horace, yet I was so struck with some passages of the true sublime, that I endeavored to render them into blank verse. This contributed not only to improve my Italian and Latin, but also my powers of versification and expression. By this employment I perceived the great difference which exists between epic and iambic verse, the measure of which alone is sufficient to enable us to distinguish colloquial poetry from every other species of verse. I likewise became sensible that for us, who have only employed the verse of eleven syllables in epic composition, it was necessary to form an arrangement of words, of sounds

perpetually varied and broken, of phrases short and energetic, which distinguish tragic from all other kinds of blank verse, as well as from every species of rhyme, whether epic or lyric. The iambics of Seneca convinced me of this truth, and perhaps furnished me with the means of putting it into practice. I remarked that the boldest and most masculine strokes of this author derived the half of their sublimity from broken and disjointed metre. In fact, what man is so wholly devoid of sentiment and ear as not to perceive the extreme difference between these two verses, the one taken from Virgil, who wishes to charm his reader —

“*Quadrupedante putrem sonitu quatit ungula campum*” ;

the other from Seneca, who aims to astonish and strike terror into the breasts of his auditors, by characterizing in two words two very different personages : —

“*Concede mortem,
Si recusares, darem.*”

On this account never should an Italian tragic author, in the most impassioned or dreadful moments, put into the mouths of his dramatis personæ lines which resemble in sound the sublime verses of our epic muse : —

“*Chiama gli abitator dell’ ombre eterne,
Il rauco suon della tartarea tromba.*”

Convinced of the necessity of preserving a complete distinction between the two styles, a distinction so much the more difficult for us other Italians, as it is necessary to confine ourselves strictly within the limits of the same metre, I gave very little attention to what the literati of Pisa said with regard to the foundation of the dramatic art, or as to the style that ought to be employed ; but I listened with the greatest deference and patience to everything which related to gram-

matical and Tuscan purity, though the Tuscans of the present day do not excel in this last respect.

Thus then in less than one year I became the possessor of three other tragedies, viz. *Filippo*, *Poliuice*, and *Antigone*. The first of these was founded on the story of *Don Carlos*, by the Abbé Saint Real, a romance which I had read several years before. The *Rival Brothers* of Racine furnished me with the idea of the second; and Bentivoglio's translation of the twelfth book of Statius suggested the groundwork of the third. Some lines which I had found in Racine and others, derived from a piece of Eschylus, translated by Father Brunoi, determined me never to read any tragedies which treated of the same subjects as those on which I undertook to write, that I might avoid the reproach of having pilfered from them, and that I might be certain that what I did, whether well or ill executed, belonged to me alone. He who reads much before entering on the task of composition often unconsciously borrows from others, and thus destroys all originality. This reason, therefore, induced me to give up, in the preceding year, the perusal of Shakespeare, a circumstance which I regretted the less because I was obliged to read him in French. In proportion as this author, to whose faults I was not blind, pleased me, the more necessary did I consider it to relinquish him.

After having written my *Antigone*, in prose, I felt myself inspired by the reading of Seneca, and conceived at the same time *Agamemnon* and *Orestes*. Though Seneca furnished me with the idea of these two last pieces, I am certain, however, that I borrowed nothing from him. Towards the end of June I left Pisa and went to Florence, where I resided during the whole of September, assiduously applying myself to acquire

the vernacular tongue, in which I made considerable progress by frequently entering into conversation with the Florentines. From that period I began to confine myself almost exclusively to this copious and elegant language, a study so essentially requisite to correct composition.

During my stay at Florence I versified my tragedy of Filippo for the second time: I began it anew in prose, without attending to my former versification: my progress, however, in this work was so extremely slow, that it even seemed to me as if I did not advance, but remained stationary. Having casually heard, one day during the month of August, while in a circle of literary men, an historical anecdote of Don Garcia, who was murdered by his own father, Cosmo I., I was struck by the relation, and as it had never been published, it was transcribed at my request from the manuscript copy in the Archives of Florence. Thus was I first led to conceive the tragedy which bears his name. As I had no critical friend at Florence whom I could consult occasionally, like Count Tana and Father Paciaudi, my verses were at first but indifferent: I possessed, however, sufficient judgment and reason neither to give a copy of them, nor even to read them, except to a very few friends. This want of success, however, instead of discouraging, only served to convince me of the necessity of perusing the productions of our first poets, and to fix them in my memory, in order to render myself familiar with poetic forms. Thus, during the summer, I stored my mind with the verses of Dante, Petrarch, Tasso, and the three first cantos of Ariosto, being fully persuaded that a day would arrive when all these forms of phraseology would become incorporated and identified with my own thoughts.

III.

I RETURNED to Turin in the month of October, not that I considered myself sufficiently Tuscanized, but because I had not made the necessary arrangements to enable me to remain longer from home. I was besides partly influenced in this determination, however frivolous it may appear, by having left my horses behind me. My passion for riding had long struggled for the mastery over my attachment to the Muses, and the love of fame had not yet sufficiently established its empire over my mind to cure me of a rage for amusement, which still occasionally detached me from my studies. This I could most easily obtain at Turin, where I possessed an excellent house, acquaintances of every description, greater opportunities of dissipation, and more numerous friends than elsewhere. Notwithstanding such occasional aberrations, I did not relax in my studies during the winter. In order to diversify my pursuits after finishing Horace, I carefully read several other authors, and among the number Sallust. The precision and elegance of this historian delighted me so much that I determined to translate his work with great care, which I accomplished in the course of the winter. I received much improvement from this species of employment, as I carefully revised and corrected the first rude version. I know not whether the work gained anything under my hand, but I reaped considerable advantage from it, not only by improving my knowledge of the Latin, but by the facility I acquired in Italian composition. During this period the incomparable Abbé Caluso returned from Portugal, and finding me, contrary to his expectations, buried in lit-

erature and firmly resolved to become a dramatic author, he aided me by his advice and instruction with the greatest condescension and benevolence.

At the termination of 1776 a circumstance occurred which gave me the greatest satisfaction that I had experienced for a long time. On going one morning to the house of Count Tana, to whom I always carried my verses with great trepidation as soon as they were finished, I presented him a sonnet, to which he found nothing to object; on the contrary he praised it much, saying to me: "This is the first of your productions which is worthy of your name." After all the humiliations and vexation I had suffered during a whole year that I had submitted to him my detestable poetry, which in the true spirit of friendship he had censured without mercy, the joy which I felt on listening to his sincere though unexpected eulogium may easily be conceived. This fortunate piece contained a description of the carrying away of Ganymede, in imitation of the beautiful sonnet of Cassiani upon the rape of Proserpine. It was printed in the first edition of my works. Stimulated by his praise to new exertion, I very soon completed the other two. I took the subject from that fable, and, like the former, they were imitations. The whole three may perhaps be considered as too servile a copy of the originals, but they possess the merit of being written with an elegance and perspicuity I had not hitherto attained. They all follow each other in my works, and though I had kept them some years, they were printed as they originally stood, without any material corrections. This dawn of success opened to my view a new career, and I composed during the winter several other sonnets on amatory subjects, though they were certainly not dictated by love. I

began a description of a beautiful and handsome woman merely as an exercise in the language, and to accustom myself to rhyme. I felt no affection for any individual, as may be seen in the sonnets themselves, which are more descriptive than impassioned. As, however, the versification is good, I have preserved them in my works. The intelligent critic will be there able to remark the gradual progress I made in the difficult art of composition, without which sonnets, however well conceived and executed, can never be considered as perfect.

My evident progress in poetry, and in the prose of Sallust, whose precision I preserved without falling into obscurity, inspired me with the most sanguine hopes of success, though I had not yet been able to imitate the harmony of style which so peculiarly distinguishes this author, and which is the true characteristic of good prose.

As, however, these studies were only intended to facilitate the acquirement of a correct dramatic style, I occasionally discontinued them in order to attempt the principal object I had in view. Thus, in the month of April, 1777, I versified *Antigone*, a labor which scarcely occupied me three weeks. From the rapidity with which I had performed this task, I flattered myself that I was greatly improved in this species of composition; but scarcely had I read my tragedy in a literary society which met every evening than I perceived how much I had deceived myself, though my auditors overwhelmed me with eulogiums. I perceived with the most lively sorrow how greatly I had fallen short of the model of perfection I had proposed to myself. The praises of my learned friends convinced me that my tragedy was not deficient in merit, so far as

related to the plot and the conduct of the passions, but my ears and my judgment informed me that it was extremely defective in point of style. Of this no person could be such a competent judge, at the first reading, as myself. The interest, the emotion, and the curiosity inspired by a tragedy, with the fable of which we are unacquainted, prevent an auditor, however correct may be his taste, from noticing the faults of style and composition, when they are not extremely prominent. But I, who was perfectly acquainted with the piece, was able to remark all the weak or false thoughts, as well as those expressions which failed in justness, strength, precision, and force of coloring.

Persuaded that I should never reach that degree of perfection I had in view while I remained in Turin, where I was frequently drawn aside from study, I instantly determined to revisit Tuscany, where my language would necessarily become daily improved; for though I never uttered a word in French at Turin, the Piedmontese jargon in which I conversed was ill calculated to improve my Italian style.

IV.

I SET out on my journey in the month of May, after having obtained the royal permission to leave his happy states. The minister to whom I preferred my request replied to me that I had only been in Tuscany the preceding year, to which I rejoined that this was precisely the reason why I wished to return. Permission was accordingly granted, but the observation of the minister suggested the idea of a project which I executed a few months afterwards, and which rendered it henceforth unnecessary for me to request a similar permission.

I proposed to prolong my stay in Tuscany, and, mingling some vanity with a praiseworthy love of glory, I resolved to proceed, attended by a great train of horses and servants. I inclined thus to exhibit the twofold character of a poet and a great lord, which is by no means a common conjunction. With eight horses, and a correspondent number of domestics, I took the road for Genoa, where I embarked with my baggage and my coach, and sent forward by land my horses to Lerici and Sarzanna, where they arrived in safety. We had arrived in sight of Lerici, when a contrary breeze springing up drove us back to Rappallo, which is only two stages distant from Genoa. Here I debarked, but, becoming weary of waiting for a favorable wind, I left my baggage in the felucca, and, taking with me a few shirts, and my portefeuille, which I never trusted out of my sight, I crossed all these precipices of the Apennines on horseback, attended by a single servant, and arrived at Sarzanna, where I found my horses, and where I waited eight days for the arrival of the felucca. Though I had the amusement of my horses, yet as I had no books except Horace and Petrarch in my pocket, time began to hang very heavy on my hands. I therefore borrowed from a priest, who was the postmaster's brother, a Titus Livius, a work which since the time I attended the classes, when I could neither comprehend nor taste its beauties, had never fallen in my way. Though an enthusiastic admirer of the precision of Sallust, I was nevertheless struck with the sublimity and majesty of Titus Livius. I read the character of Virginia, and the animated discourse of Icilius, and so powerful was the effect they produced on my mind that I instantly conceived the idea of a tragedy, which I would certainly have finished on the spot, had not the

arrival of the expected felucca diverted my thoughts, and put a stop to my design.

I ought here to explain to the reader what is meant by the terms *conceive*, *develop*, and *put into verse*, which so frequently occur in the course of this work. All my tragedies, so to speak, have been composed three times. By this method I at least avoided the error of too much haste, which should always be carefully guarded against in such productions, since if they are ill-conceived at first, it is a fault not easily remedied. By the term *conceive* is to be understood the distributing of the subject into acts and scenes, fixing the number of the personages, and tracing in two pages of prose a summary of the plot. By *developing* I mean the writing dialogues in prose for the different scenes indicated in this rude sketch, without rejecting a single thought, and with as much enthusiasm as possible, without embarrassing myself with the style or composition. By *versifying*, in short, must be understood, not only converting this prose into verse, but also curtailing the exuberances of the style, selecting the best thoughts, and clothing them in poetic language. After these three operations, I proceed, like other authors, to polish, correct, and amend. But if the conception or development of the piece be imperfect or erroneous, the superadded labor will never produce a good tragedy. In this way did I execute the whole of my dramatic works, beginning with Filippo, and I am convinced that this constituted more than two thirds of the labor. If on reperusing the manuscript, after a sufficient period had been suffered to elapse, in order that I might forget the original distribution of the scenes, I felt myself assailed by such a crowd of ideas and emotions as compelled me, so to speak, to take up my pen, I concluded that my sketch

was worthy of being unfolded ; but if, on the contrary, I felt not an enthusiasm equal at least to what I had experienced on conceiving the design, I either changed my plan or threw the papers into the fire. As soon as I became satisfied that my first idea was perfect, I expanded it with the greatest rapidity, frequently writing two acts a day, and seldom less than one, so that in six days my tragedy was, I will not say finished, but created.

In this manner, without any other judge than my own feelings, I have only finished those, the sketches of which I had written with energy and enthusiasm ; or if I have finished any other, I have at least never taken the trouble to clothe them in verse. This was the case with *Charles I.*, which I began to write in French prose immediately after finishing *Filippo*. When I had reached to about the middle of the third act, my heart and my hand became so benumbed that I found it impossible to hold my pen. The same thing happened in regard to *Romeo and Juliet*, the whole of which I nearly expanded, though with much labor to myself and at long intervals. On reperusing this sketch, I found my enthusiasm so much repressed that, transported with rage against myself, I could proceed no further, but threw my work into the fire.

By the method above detailed my tragedies, notwithstanding their numerous defects, have at least the merit of uniformity ; so that the phrases, the thoughts, and the action of the fifth act are identified with the thoughts, the phrases, and the disposition of the fourth, and so on even to the first verse of the first act, which naturally keeps alive the attention of the reader, and imparts interest to the action of the piece. By this method, moreover, nothing remains for the author to

do, after expanding the plot, except clothing his sentiments in verse, in separating the gold from the lead, so that the attention which he bestows on polishing his verses cannot weaken that enthusiastic inspiration which every one should blindly follow who attempts to delineate impassioned or horrific subjects. If it should be found that I have derived any advantage from this mode of composition, this little digression may not prove wholly useless to future dramatic authors. If, on the contrary, I should have deceived myself, a knowledge of my error may lead others to mark out for themselves a better plan of procedure.

But to return to my narrative. No sooner did the anxiously-expected felucca arrive at Lerici than I took my baggage from on board, and departed for Pisa. Having my mind fixed on the subject of Virginia, I resolved to remain only two days in this city, flattering myself that I should reap greater improvement in point of language at Siena, where they not only speak better, but where there is a less influx of foreigners. I dreaded, besides, meeting with a beautiful, rich, and noble lady, whom I might have espoused, with the consent of her parents, and with whom I had nearly fallen in love during my former stay at this place. I was, however, now infinitely wiser in this respect than I had shown myself to be several years before at Turin, when I permitted my brother-in-law to demand for me the hand of another lady, who in the end rejected my suit; for this time, however, I was not inclined to pay my court to one who I was almost certain would not refuse me. This connection would have proved extremely convenient to me, not more on account of the character of the lady than from other circumstances; and on the whole she certainly did not displease me.

Eight years afterwards, my travels through Europe, the love of glory, a passion for study, the necessity of preserving my freedom, in order to speak and write the truth without restraint,—all these reasons powerfully warned me that under a despotic government it is sufficiently difficult even to live single, and that no one who reflects deeply will either become a husband or a father: thus I crossed the Arno and arrived at Siena. I have always blessed the day I reached this city, since I found in it a circle of five or six individuals possessing judgment, taste, and learning, an occurrence seldom to be met with in such a small place. Among the most distinguished of these was the respectable Francis Gori Gandellini, of whom I have several times spoken in my different writings, and a tender recollection of whose friendship will never leave me but with life. A certain similarity in our character and manner of thinking, which was more estimable in him than in me, since we were placed in very different circumstances, and the reciprocal want of some one to whom we could unburden our hearts, animated by the same feelings and passions, very soon united us in the most sincere and lasting friendship. I had through life ardently longed for the solace of a true friend; but my stiff and abstracted manners were ill calculated to inspire this sentiment in others, while it rendered me slow in opening my heart to its influence. On this account I had always very few friends, but I am proud to say that those I did possess were better and more estimable than myself. I sought in friendship only the reciprocal communication of the weaknesses incident to humanity, in order that the reason and benevolence of friendship might correct or meliorate whatever was reprehensible, while it strength-

ened and ennobled what was laudable and praiseworthy in my character; such, for example, as the weakness of becoming an author. It was in this respect that the manly and candid counsels of Gandellini proved of infinite utility to me. The ardent desire I felt of meriting the esteem of this worthy man imparted new energy to my imagination, and suffered me to enjoy neither tranquillity nor repose till I had rendered my productions worthy of his approbation. It was this invaluable friend who suggested to me the idea of taking, as the groundwork of a tragedy, the Conspiracy of the Pazzi.

I was unacquainted with this fact, and he advised me to take it from Machiavel in preference to every other historian. Thus, by a strange combination of circumstances, this author, who at a future period afforded me so much delight, was given to me by another sincere friend, who resembled in many respects my dear D'Acunha, though possessed of greater learning and more profound erudition. In fact, though I was not sufficiently prepared to read the whole of Machiavel, I eagerly devoured a great many other passages besides the relation of the conspiracy above mentioned: thus I not only instantly conceived my tragedy, but, delighted with the copious, original, and nervous style of the author, I felt myself unable to resume my other studies, and proceeded to write the two books on Tyranny, such as they were printed several years afterwards.

If I had treated this subject anew at a more advanced period of my life, I might have displayed more erudition, and fortified my opinions by the authority of history; but I was disinclined when I printed these pieces to enfeeble, by the frost of years, and the pedantry of my little learning, the fire of youth, and that noble and

just indignation which I believe is visible in every page, without being deficient in just and forcible reasoning, which, if I deceive not myself, is the characteristic feature in this little piece.

V.

HAVING thus unburdened my mind of the innate hatred I felt against tyranny, I put my little piece aside, after reading it to some of my friends, and thought no more of it. I resumed the buskin, and developed with great rapidity Agamemnon, Virginia, and Orestes. With respect to the last, I had entertained a contemptible scruple which my friend very soon dissipated. I had conceived the idea of this tragedy the year before while I was at Pisa, from reading the detestable Agamemnon of Seneca. In the winter, when turning over my books at Turin, I opened by chance a volume of Voltaire's tragedies: the first words which struck my eyes were, "Tragedy of Orestes." I instantly shut the book, piqued at finding a competitor among the moderns. Some men of letters, to whom I mentioned the circumstance, assured me that it was one of the best tragedies of this author, which disgusted me with my own. After having, while at Siena, sketched my Agamemnon without even opening that of Seneca, lest I should become a plagiarist, in depicting the character of Orestes, I consulted my friend on this subject, and requested him to give me Orestes, that I might peruse it before proceeding with my own. But Gandellini refused my request, saying to me: "Write your piece without reading that of the French author; if you possess genius for a dramatic writer, it will either be worse, better, or

equal to Voltaire's, but it will at least be your own." I followed this sage and dignified advice; and since that period it has been a rule from which I have never deviated. Whenever I choose a subject that has been previously adopted by a modern author, I never peruse his work till after finishing my own. If I should have accidentally witnessed their representation, I endeavor as much as possible to forget them, or, if I find this impossible, to pursue a route contrary to theirs. By this method, if my productions be not perfect, they have at least the garb and appearance of originality.

The five months which I passed at Siena proved extremely salutary to my mind. Besides the works of which I have spoken, I continued the study of the Latin classics; and among others Juvenal, which I read as frequently as I had done Horace. As the winter at Siena is rather disagreeable, and as, moreover, I was not wholly cured of a desire to roam from place to place, I determined in the month of October to visit Florence, without, however, being fully resolved whether I should pass the winter there or return to Turin. Scarcely, however, had I arrived in that city, with the intention of remaining a month, or longer, as it should prove agreeable, than an event occurred which induced me to take up my residence in it for several years, — an event which fortunately determined me to abjure my native country, and thus acquire literary liberty, without which I should never have produced any valuable work, if indeed any of my works may be deemed worthy of such an appellation.

During the preceding summer, which I passed at Florence, I had frequently seen a beautiful, amiable, and very distinguished foreigner. It was impossible not to meet and remark this lady, and still more im-

possible not to seek to please when once in her company. Though a great number of the Florentine nobility, as well as most foreigners of distinction visited at her house, yet being always anxious, from my reserved and backward character, to avoid the society of beautiful and accomplished women, I declined an introduction, and contented myself with meeting her at the theatres and public walks. The first impression she made on me was infinitely agreeable. Large black eyes, full of fire and gentleness, joined to a fair complexion and flaxen hair, gave to her beauty a brilliancy it was difficult to withstand. Twenty-five years of age, possessing a taste for letters and the fine arts, an amiable character, an immense fortune, and placed in domestic circumstances of a very painful nature, how was it possible to escape where so many reasons existed for loving?

During the autumn one of my friends offered several times to introduce me at her house. I believed myself sufficiently fortified against her charms, but I was soon unconsciously caught in the toils of love. Still irresolute whether to resist or yield to this new passion, I took post in the month of December, and proceeded to Rome. This foolish and fatiguing journey gave rise to my sonnet on Rome, which I composed in a wretched inn at Baccana, where I could not shut my eyes. This journey occupied me only twelve days. Both in going and returning, I passed through Siena, and visited my friend Gandellini, who disapproved not of the new chains which he perceived I was forging for myself, and which became strongly riveted on my return to Florence. This fourth and last passion manifested itself by very different symptoms from the others. In the three former the mind had no share, but in the

present instance a sentiment of esteem, mingling with love, rendered this passion, if less impetuous, at least more profound and durable. Such was the love which henceforward animated and held dominion over my mind, and which will only terminate with my existence. I soon perceived that the object of my present attachment, far from impeding my progress in the pursuit of useful knowledge, or deranging my studies, like the frivolous women with whom I was formerly enamored, urged me on by her example to everything dignified and praiseworthy. Having once learned to know and appreciate so rare and valuable a friend, I yielded myself up entirely to her influence. I deceived not myself; twelve years afterwards, at the moment I am writing, and at an age when the illusions of the passions have ceased to operate, I feel that I become daily more attached to her, in proportion as time destroys the brilliancy of her fleeting beauty, the only charm which she owes not to herself. Whenever I reflect on her virtues, my soul is elevated, improved, and tranquillized, and I dare to affirm that the feelings of her mind, which I have uniformly endeavored to fortify and confirm, are not dissimilar to my own.

VI.

CALM and tranquil, I then began to labor like a man who had at last attained the object of his wishes. I resolved never again to quit Florence, while the object of my affection remained in it. This determination rendered it necessary that I should execute a project which I had entertained for some time.

I had always felt the weight of those chains intolerable with which I was bound to my country, and

especially those which obliged the possessors of fiefs to obtain permission of the king before they could leave the kingdom for however short a period. This permission, which was sometimes obtained with difficulty, and granted with a bad grace, was always limited. I had already requested this permission four or five times, and although I had never been refused it, yet I could not reconcile myself to the steps which were requisite to obtain it. This law I considered unjust in its principle, since neither younger sons, nor the citizens of any class, when not in business, were subjected to it. My repugnance to this species of tyranny became greater as I advanced in years. The last time I had obtained this permission, it was accompanied with some expressions which gave me much vexation. Besides, the number of my works had gradually increased: Virginia, which I had written with all the freedom that the subject required; the work on Tyranny dictated by an author who should have lived in a country really free; the emotions of pleasure I had felt on perusing Tacitus, Machiavel, and the few other authors who like them think with energy and freedom; the knowledge of my pursuits, and the impossibility of remaining at Turin, if I inclined to publish any work inimical to the existing tyranny; the danger which I should experience by remaining subject to the laws of Sardinia, wherever I might be, if I printed anything of this kind, even in foreign countries, — all these reasons, conjoined to the passion I had happily imbibed, determined me to expatriate myself, and relinquish forever a country which had given me birth, but which despotism had rendered an unfit abode for one resolved to think for himself.

Several means of executing this project presented

themselves. I might have endeavored to get my permission prolonged from year to year, which perhaps would have been the wisest measure; but I could not endure a state of uncertainty; and how could I reckon on that which depended on the will of others? I might, by means of finesse and chicanery, have disposed of my property by clandestine sales, in order to escape from my noble prison. But these means I regarded as dishonorable; and they displeased me, perhaps also because they were not in extremes. Accustomed, besides, from my character to put all to the hazard, I firmly resolved to terminate this affair at once, to which I must again and again have recurred, unless I had renounced the glory of becoming an independent author. Once determined, I exerted all my strength to attain the object I had in view, and I did well, though at the time I acted more perhaps under the influence of my ardent feelings than of reason. Certain it is, that had I not adopted prompt measures, or if I had begun to print even the most harmless writings in any other state, the thing would have become impossible, and my subsistence, my glory, and my liberty would have remained subject to the will of an absolute prince, who, necessarily wounded by my manner of thinking and writing, and my free and uncourteous behavior, would never have consented to allow me to escape from his power.

A law existed at this time in Piedmont which ran thus: "It is enacted that no one shall print books or other writings out of our states, without permission of our censors, under the pain of incurring a fine of seventy crowns, or corporal punishment, if circumstances render it necessary to exhibit a public example." To this law is subjoined another still more iniquitous,

worded in the following manner: "Those subjects who inhabit our states shall never absent themselves without our express authority in writing." Hence it is evident, I could not be both a subject of his majesty of Sardinia and an author. I chose the latter, and, being an enemy to all chicane and subterfuge, I took the most direct road to disfranchise myself, by resigning the whole of my property to my sister Julia, who had married Count Cumiana. This resignation was executed in the most solemn and irrevocable manner. I only reserved to myself an annuity of fourteen thousand livres of Piedmont, which amounted to little more than one half of my original revenues. I would even have been contented to resign the other half to have purchased the freedom of thinking and writing, and the liberty of choosing my place of residence. It is impossible to convey an adequate idea of the delays and embarrassments I experienced before I could terminate this affair; the legal forms and the necessity of transacting the business by letter, occupied much time. It was necessary, besides, to obtain the usual permission from the king, who interfered in all the domestic concerns of his subjects. It was also requisite that my brother-in-law should receive the royal permission to accept this gift, and to remit my annuity to any country where I might fix my abode. The least clear-sighted perceived that I could have no other reasons for this donation but a desire to expatriate myself. It was consequently absolutely necessary that permission should also be obtained from the government, which might otherwise have opposed its payment in a foreign country. Happily the king, who certainly knew my peculiar mode of thinking, of which I had afforded the most unequivocal proofs, was better pleased that I

should leave his states than remain in them ; he therefore immediately consented to my request ; we were both well pleased, he to lose such a subject, and I to acquire my liberty.

I cannot help here mentioning a strange circumstance in order to console my enemies, and make those laugh at my expense, who on examining themselves more nearly should discover that they are either less mad or less childish than I was. To those who make the human heart their study, it will prove, that in the same character, at least in mine, the weakness of the dwarf is sometimes found united with the strength of the giant. The fact is, that even at the period when I wrote *Virginia* and the work on *Tyranny* ; when I broke the inglorious chains which bound me to my native country, I continued to wear the uniform of the King of Sardinia, though I had left his service for more than four years. What will philosophers say, when I frankly acknowledge the reason of this ? It seemed to me that I looked better and handsomer in this than in any other dress. Laugh, readers ; you have reason, and if you think proper, add that, like a child, I was more anxious to appear to advantage in the eyes of others than estimable in my own.

The settlement of my affairs had been protracted on various pretences, from the month of January till November, 1778 ; and this desirable event was still farther delayed by my wishing to obtain from my sister the sum of one hundred thousand livres at once, in lieu of the annual revenue of five thousand. This second contract experienced more opposition than the first. The consent of his majesty being, however, once obtained, I placed the sum along with some others in the French funds ; not that I had more confidence in his most

Christian majesty than I had in the King of Sardinia, but it seemed to me that in thus disposing of my property I would be more secure of an independence.

This was an epoch as important to me as that in which I made the gift, and I have always thought the idea and the consequences which resulted from it extremely fortunate. I did not communicate to my fair friend the design I had in view, till the contract was solemnly ratified. I did not wish to put her delicacy to the test, nor force her to disapprove my proceedings as contrary to my interest, or to approve them as in many respects necessary to the duration of our attachment. This determination was in fact the only one which could enable me to remain near her. On being made acquainted with my proceedings, she blamed me with that ingenuous candor for which she was so distinguished. But as the affair was settled beyond recall, it was necessary to reconcile herself to what had happened, and she pardoned me for not having sooner informed her of this transaction; perhaps she loved me better for my delicate silence: it was certainly impossible she could esteem me less on this account. During this period I was anxiously endeavoring to facilitate the conclusion of my business in Turin, determined, whatever might be the consequence, to overcome every obstacle that was thrown in my way by the king, the laws, and my relations. I gave orders to Elias, whom I had left at Turin, to dispose of my furniture and silver plate. By his unremitting assiduity he realized in two months six thousand sequins, for which I desired him to obtain bills of exchange payable on Leghorn. By some accident three weeks elapsed between the writing of my letter, and the execution of the orders contained in it, during which I neither received any

communication from Turin, nor a letter of advice from my banker. Though of a character naturally devoid of suspicion, I could not wholly divest my mind of it in the present instance, especially as Elias had on every other occasion displayed the greatest promptitude and exactness. Distrust being thus excited, my ardent imagination made me regard as certain an event which was only possible. During fifteen days I was firmly persuaded that the six thousand sequins had disappeared along with the good opinion which my faithful domestic had so justly inspired. Supposing this to have been the case, I found myself in the most perplexing situation imaginable; the affair with my sister was not fully arranged; my brother-in-law continued to throw new difficulties in the way of a settlement, and this was always done in the name of the king. I at length became so indignant at this unworthy treatment, that I intimated to Count Cumiana that if he did not choose to accept of the donation, he had only to take possession of my property, as it was my fixed determination never to return to my country, and that I held their king and their money in equal contempt. I was, in short, perfectly determined to expatriate myself, even at the risk of becoming a beggar. In this painful state of uncertainty pale Misery already presented herself before my eyes. In the delirium of my imagination, ever fertile in conjuring up gloomy ideas, the mode of procuring a subsistence which most frequently occurred to me was that of commencing horse-breaker, in which I believed myself to be an adept. It seemed to me that this would be less slavish, and that I could join with it poetry, as it is more easy to write tragedies in a stable than in a court. Fortunately, however, the bills of exchange from Elias at length arrived.

Before experiencing all these chimerical afflictions, I had, as soon as the deed of gift was executed, sent back all my domestics except one and a cook, and these I parted with a short time afterwards. Though I had always been very moderate in the indulgences of the table, I contracted from this period the salutary habit of the strictest sobriety. I wholly left off the use of wine, coffee, and similar luxuries. I confined myself to the use of baked or boiled rice for several years.

With respect to my horses, I had sent four of them to Turin, to be sold along with those I had left in that city. I made a present of four others to some Florentine nobles, who in fact were only casual acquaintances, but who, possessing less pride than myself, accepted my gift. I presented my clothes to my valet, for it was at this period that I sacrificed my Sardinian uniform. Henceforward I dressed in black in the evening, and wore dark blue in the morning, colors which I have never since relinquished, and which I will continue to wear through life. Thus I gradually restricted myself to the most simple necessaries, so that my avarice returned with the relinquishment of my property.

Thus prepared for every possible event, I placed my six thousand sequins in the French funds; and as I had always a tendency to run into extremes, I carried my economy so far, that at length it degenerated into almost sordid avarice: I say *almost*, for I still continued daily to change my linen, and to pay the most minute attention to my person: but had my stomach been consulted in writing this life, it would have cancelled the word *almost*, and substituted *very sordid* in its room. This I believe was the second and last fit of this shameful vice, which contracts and

degrades the mind. Although I was perpetually endeavoring to devise some new modes of retrenchment, I yet laid out considerable sums of money in the purchase of books. I procured all our best Italian works, and a great number of the most valuable editions of the Latin classics. These I devoured at different intervals one after the other, but did not reap the same advantage I should have done by reading them more slowly, and especially with a good commentary. I had only been able lately to read these cursed commentaries. In my youth it was more consonant to the indolent state of my mind to conjecture the import of difficult passages, or to skip over them, than to have recourse to the notes for an elucidation.

In the course of this year, 1778, I finally arranged my pecuniary concerns. I likewise continued to pursue my literary occupations, though my present situation was extremely unfavorable for bringing them to a state of perfection, especially as a new obstacle had occurred to prevent my progress in the Tuscan language. My inestimable friend was at that time wholly unacquainted with Italian, which compelled me to converse with her in French. I endeavored, however, to counteract the Gallicisms I thus acquired by carefully perusing, during the rest of the day, a portion of our prolix though excellent prose writers of the fourteenth century.

At length I prevailed upon my worthy friend to learn the Italian, in the acquirement of which she succeeded better than any other foreigner I ever knew. She pronounced it in a tone equally mellifluent as the native females of any of the Italian states, even Rome itself, who all mangle it in such a manner as to be extremely disagreeable to an ear accustomed to the true

Tuscan accent. In a short time we conversed in no other language; but as her house was always crowded with foreigners, my poor Tuscan experienced constant martyrdom. Of all the vexations I underwent during the three years I remained in Florence, this was the greatest, and it pursued me during the whole course of my life, since chance always condemned me to listen to this barbarous jargon. Hence, if it be found that I have written the Tuscan with purity, correctness, and ease, I must be allowed double merit, on account of the obstacles I had to encounter, and if I have failed, these must plead my excuse.

VII.

DURING the year 1778, after I had completed the versification of Virginia, and the greatest part of Agamemnon, I was seized by an acute disorder of an inflammatory nature, which forced my physician to prescribe blood-letting. My strength was hereby much reduced, and my convalescence proved slow and tedious. My malady originated from mental agitation, the consequence of domestic embarrassments, from effects of study, and the influence of love. Though I had settled my affairs in the course of the last year, and no longer felt any disquiet on that head, yet the influence of love and study, which augmented every day, soon deprived me of that corporeal vigor which exercise and incessant travelling during ten years had imparted to my constitution.

About the commencement of summer, however, my health was re-established, and I devoted much of my time to study. Of all the seasons, the summer is

my greatest favorite. In proportion as the heat is excessive, I find my spirits revive, and become more particularly fitted for composition. During the month of May, in this year, I began a small poem on the death of Duke Alexander, who was slain by Lorenzo de Medici. Though I was highly pleased with the subject, I did not yet find in it sufficient for the groundwork of a tragedy. I composed it in detached portions, without any previous sketch, solely for the purpose of improving me in rhyme, from which my attention had been diverted by writing so frequently in blank verse. I wrote also some amatory pieces, equally with the view of celebrating the mistress of my affections, and of dissipating the chagrin I felt on account of the domestic circumstances in which she was placed.

All the other amatory verses in my works, which follow after the sonnet,

“Negri, vivaci, in dolce fuoco ardenti,

were inspired by her, for I certainly never chanted the praises of any other woman. Without entering on the question of their real merits, it seems to me that the feelings which impelléd me to write, and which daily became augmented, may be clearly traced throughout these little pieces. This I conceive is more particularly distinguishable in those which were written during the period fate separated us from each other.

I return to the occupations which engaged my attention during the year 1778. In the month of July, finding myself inspired with sentiments of liberty, I sketched the plan of my tragedy of the Pazzi, and subsequently that of Don Garcia. Shortly afterwards, I conceived, and distributed into chapters, my three Essays on Government and Literature: but as I did

not find expressions at the time answerable to my ideas, I suspended my labor, that I might not be again under the necessity of remoulding it, when I should resume the subject in order to its correction. In August my fair friend having suggested the celebrated Mary Stuart as a proper subject for my pen, I readily undertook it for her gratification. During September I employed myself in the versification of Orestes, which terminated my labors for this year.

During the year 1779, having put the finishing hand to my dramatic work on the Conspiracy of the Pazzi, I sketched Rosamunda, Octavia, and Timoleon; and after developing Rosamunda and Mary Stuart, I completed the versification of Don Garcia. I likewise finished the first canto of my poem, and entered on the second.

Amid these laborious occupations, I felt my mind tranquillized by the presence of my lady, and by the regular correspondence which I kept up with my absent friends. One of these, Gandellini, had travelled twice or thrice to Florence in order to see me, and the other, the worthy Abbé Caluso, arrived in this city about the middle of 1779. He continued nearly one year at Florence, where we saw each other daily, spending always the afternoon together. I learned from his erudite and agreeable conversation what I should never have acquired by the perusal of books. From him I also learned to discern and appreciate the genius of Virgil, whose works till then I had merely read.

With such a model before my eyes, I endeavored to infuse a portion of his varied and divine harmony into my own dialogues. I endeavored likewise to imitate, as much as was admissible with the genius of our

language, the concise style and the transpositions which render the versification of Virgil so strikingly different from that of Ovid and all other poets; a difference which poets can alone discern. It was necessary that I should endeavor to collect, from every quarter, modes and turns of expression, by which the mechanism of my dramatic poetry might assume an appearance and character peculiar to itself. In this species of composition, we cannot aid the versification, either by long and inflated periods, by a variety of imagery, by numerous transpositions, by the use of pompous or quaint terms, or by far-fetched epithets. The mere arrangement of words, simple and full of dignity, constitutes the essence of verse, without destroying that ease necessary to dialogue. What I have here endeavored to express, I was not able to put into practice in my own compositions till several years afterwards; perhaps not even till I reprinted my tragedies at Paris. While I acknowledge many obligations to Dante and Petrarch, in enabling me to write tolerable verses, it is only to Virgil, Cesarotti, and my own assiduity that I stand indebted for the art of tragic composition. Before I succeeded in forming my own style, I often fell into grievous blunders, and became bombastic and obscure in order to avoid weakness and insipidity. I have already, however, sufficiently spoken of this in another place, when attempting to unfold the principles of style and manner of writing.

In 1780 I completed the versification of *Mary Stuart*. I likewise developed *Timoleon*, the groundwork of which was drawn from Plutarch, as well as *Octavia*, which was the real offspring of Tacitus, an author whom I uniformly perused with delight. I curtailed and poetized *Filippo* for the third time, not-

withstanding which it still displayed conspicuous traits of its exotic origin. I also versified Rosamunda and a great part of Octavia, a labor which was frequently interrupted by the chagrin and sorrow which at this time oppressed me.

VIII.

MY fair friend, as I have already said, was weighed down by sorrow. Her afflictions augmented every day; and the barbarous treatment which she suffered from her unrelenting husband induced her at length, in order to save her health and life, to consider by what means she might emancipate herself from the dominion of her cruel persecutor. Thus then was I led anew, in opposition to my character, to employ all my interest with those in power, in order to influence them to succor this innocent victim of cruelty and oppression. Fortified by the testimony of my own conscience, and by the idea that I had not taken a single step in this affair but for the behoof of others, and that I had uniformly given her the most prudent advice, — a maxim which, though disregarded by me in the management of my own concerns, I never deviated from in counselling others; convinced, in short, that it was absolutely impossible to act otherwise, I took no pains on this occasion, nor indeed on any other, to wipe away the foolish and malignant calumnies so industriously propagated to blacken my reputation. Suffice it to say, that I rescued this worthy woman from the tyranny of a man destitute of reason, and incessantly given to intoxication, without compromising in any respect her honor, and without infringing in the smallest degree the established regulations of

society. All those who witnessed the deplorable circumstances in which she was placed, and the brutal tyranny to which she was constantly subjected, must agree that it was no easy matter to conduct this affair with sufficient*prudence, and to bring it to a happy issue. My unhappy friend testified a desire to visit one of the convents of Florence. Her husband failed not to accompany her ; but was very much astonished when he was given to understand that his wife was to remain there by order of the government. Here she resided only for a short time, after which she went to Rome, at the request of her brother-in-law, who wished her to enter into a convent in that city. The reasons which actuated her to determine on a separation were so just and reasonable that her conduct was generally spoken of in terms of approbation.

This amiable woman set out for Rome towards the end of December, while I, like a forsaken wretch, remained behind at Florence. It was then I became thoroughly sensible that without her society I should be deprived of the half of my existence. I became incapable of every occupation, and could devote myself to no serious study ; nothing gave me pleasure, everything, even glory and myself, were forgotten. In the management of this affair, it seemed as if I had only exerted myself for her benefit and my own misfortune ; since in my estimation, a greater could not befall me than that of never again beholding her. Motives of decorum, however, prevented me immediately following her to Rome ; on the other hand, to live at Florence I found impossible. I remained, however, till the end of January, 1781, and these four weeks appeared to me as so many ages. Finding no solace in reading, or any other amusement, I took at length

the resolution of proceeding to Naples. This route I chose in preference to every other, because in my way thither it was necessary to pass through Rome.

One year had now elapsed since my second fit of avarice left me. I had laid out at two different times one hundred and sixty thousand francs, in the purchase of annuities in France, which secured me a certain means of livelihood independent of Piedmont. Relinquishing my penurious habits, and resuming a moderate expenditure, I purchased four horses, which, however, were certainly too many for a poet.

At length I reached Rome, — I saw her: my heart is yet lacerated when I reflect on it. I saw her behind a grate, less tormented it is true than she had been at Florence, but in other respects much more unhappy. We were separated, and who could say for how long a time? I shed many bitter tears, but I had at least the consolation of reflecting that her health would be re-established, that she might sleep in tranquillity, and was no longer subject to the caprice and sway of a cruel and drunken tyrant; in short, that she would exist! These considerations contributed somewhat to assuage the anguish and melancholy felt on I the approaching separation, which circumstances rendered inevitable. I remained at Rome only a very few days, during which, such was the influence of my attachment, that in order to serve the mistress of my affections, I was led to employ expedients which I would not have practised to obtain the empire of the universe; expedients to which I never even submitted at the moment when I presented myself on the threshold of the temple of fame. Though to obtain access was extremely difficult, I never stooped to flatter and lavish incense on those who were, or pretended to be, its

guardians: now, however, I visited and paid my court to her brother-in-law, on whom alone depended her restoration to liberty, with which he continued to flatter us. I speak not here of these two brothers, because they are already sufficiently known to the public: though time may probably have buried them in oblivion, it is not my intention to draw them out of it. If I cannot speak favorably, I wish not to speak unfavorably of them. What greater proof therefore could I give of my unbounded attachment to this inestimable woman than to have humbled myself before them?

I departed for Naples agreeably to my promise, and as delicacy required. I felt my mind much more affected by the present than our former separation at Florence. The first, which lasted only about forty days, had afforded me a foretaste of the misery and anguish I experienced during this last, which was longer and more uncertain than the former.

The view of Naples and its delightful environs afforded me not that gratification which I expected to derive from them. They were no longer new to me, and my mind was a prey to sorrow. Books I found insupportable: my poetic and dramatic studies were neglected; in a word, I lived only to despatch and receive couriers. My thoughts were wholly occupied with my fair and absent friend. I frequently took a solitary ride along the charming shores of Posilippo and Baïæ; at other times I pursued the road to Capua and Caserta. I almost incessantly wept, and so weighed down was I by sorrow, that I could not even flee to my accustomed occupations to assuage the oppression of my heart. It was thus that I passed my time from the month of February to the middle of May. When at any time

my heart was less oppressed, I endeavored to apply myself to study. I improved the versification of part of my *Polinice*. I had concluded the preceding year the second canto of my little poem, and I now felt disposed to commence the third; but I could not finish the first stanza, the subject being too lively for the gloomy state of my mind. During these four months I did nothing but occupy myself in writing letters, and in reading a hundred times over those which I received from the object of my attachment. Her prospects, however, now began to brighten, for toward the end of March she obtained permission from his Holiness the Pope to leave the convent, and to live apart from her husband in the town mansion of her brother-in-law, who himself generally resided at a country-house not far from the city. Though my inclinations would, on this occasion, have led me to return to Rome, yet I felt that such a step was inadmissible with propriety. Nothing is more painful to an upright and feeling mind than the struggles it has to encounter when placed between love and duty.

Though I deferred my departure for Rome the whole of April, and determined to exert the same fortitude during May, yet I scarcely knew how I reached that city on the 12th of this month. No sooner had I arrived, than, influenced by my attachment, I began to assign plausible motives for residing in this city, and to practise all the arts and obliquity of a thoroughbred courtier, in order sometimes to see the woman whom I adored. Thus, then, after committing many extravagant actions, and exerting every effort to render myself independent, I became transformed into a man who visits, cajoles, and flatters like a candidate for the prelacy. All this I did, and submitted to a thousand

servilities, with a view to conciliate the good-will of prelates and priestlings, who officiously interfered in the affairs of my lady. Happily she required nothing but mere protection from her brother-in-law, as she possessed an ample fortune wholly at her own disposal.

IX.

As soon as I could emancipate myself from this servile mode of life, and was at liberty to enjoy the society of my fair friend, I again recommenced my dramatic studies. After finishing the versification of *Polinice*, I devoted every moment to the completion of *Antigone*, *Virginia*, *Agamemnon*, *Orestes*, the *Pazzi*, *Don Garcia*, and *Timoleon*: I likewise endeavored, by a fourth revision, to improve my *Filippo*; but in this I did not succeed. In order to afford myself some respite from my dramatic studies, I prosecuted the third canto of my little poem. During the month of December of this year, I wrote, at one stretch, the four first odes on the Independence of America. I was attracted to this subject from having read some beautiful odes by *Filicaja*, which greatly pleased me. I composed my four odes in seven days, and the third was finished in one. Except a few trifling alterations, I made no change in these odes, but allowed them to remain as they were originally written, — so great at least did I find the difference between composing lyric odes in rhyme, and colloquial blank verse.

At the commencement of 1782, finding my tragedies considerably advanced, I flattered myself with being able to finish them in the course of the year. I had proposed in my own mind not to exceed twelve, all of which I had already conceived, developed, and trans-

formed into verse. I next proceeded to versify them a second time, to correct and polish them. This labor was performed according to the order in which I had conceived and developed them.

While engaged in these occupations, about the middle of February, 1782, the *Merope* of Maffei fell a second time into my hands. Induced by the consideration that I might learn something from it with respect to style, I determined on reading it. On casting my eyes over some detached portions of it, I felt myself suddenly seized with a paroxysm of indignation and rage, on beholding Italy so wretchedly degraded, that this tragedy should be considered not only as the best that had yet been written, but be regarded as a model of perfection to all future tragic writers. At that instant I conceived, as if by magic influence, another tragedy, bearing the same name, and written on the same subject; but much more simple, impassioned, and energetic. Impelled by a kind of inspiration, I pursued the idea; whether I have succeeded others must determine. If, however, a scribbler in verse might ever with any truth exclaim, "*Est Deus in nobis*," I might certainly affirm it on conceiving, developing, and versifying *Merope*. These three operations, usually executed at very distant intervals, followed each other in the present case so instantaneously that my mind enjoyed not a moment's respite till the work was completed. I was affected in a similar manner when I composed *Saul*. I had begun to read the Bible this year, during the month of March, but without order or regularity. This reading, however, so filled my brain with poetic enthusiasm, that I felt myself irresistibly impelled to write on some subject derived from it. The subject chosen was *Saul*, which I conceived and exe-

cutted with equal rapidity as the former. It was my fourteenth tragedy, and ought to have been the last. In the course of this year my imagination was so violently excited that I scarcely knew whither it would have carried me, had I given reins to it. Already had two other subjects, drawn from the Bible, occurred to my imagination, but though naturally inclined to extremes, I resisted the impulse. While developing Merope and Saul, I felt so much regret in exceeding the number I had fixed on, that I mentally vowed not to proceed in their versification, till the others should be completed. In these resolutions, however, I did not persevere, for so irresistibly was I urged forward, that I felt it impossible to return to them till these were finished. I may, however, venture to affirm that none of my dramatic productions cost me so little labor, and had been composed within so short a period, as these two last.

Towards the end of September, 1782, I copied, re-copied, and corrected all these pieces; I wish I could add polished, but this I found some months afterwards they were very far from having attained. Nevertheless, I then considered myself one of the first characters of the age. In ten months I had versified seven tragedies, besides conceiving, developing, and versifying two others; in a word, I had corrected fourteen. Finding some relaxation absolutely necessary after such unre-mitted exertion, I determined, during October, to take some repose, an indulgence which proved equally pleasing to my taste as salutary to my health. I spent a few days at this time in visiting the celebrated cascade at Terni.

Puffed up with pride, which I durst hardly acknowledge to myself, I suffered it, however, to be penetrated

by her whom I regarded as my better half. Her attachment to me rendered her also subject to illusion: she almost considered me as a great man, and did everything in her power to induce me really to become so. After indulging for a few months in all the intoxication of self-love, I at length began to re-examine my tragedies, and discovered that I had yet a considerable space to run over before I could arrive at the goal I so ardently desired to attain. As I was only, however, thirty-four years of age, and still young in the career of literature, which I had entered eight years before, I did not despair of one day acquiring the palm. I suffered not, however, these hopes to evaporate in words, though a ray of glory had already shed its influence over my labors.

I had successively read all these tragedies in different societies composed of men of letters, literary women, others, who, though not possessed of cultivated minds, were yet susceptible of all the passions, and of others again who were grossly ignorant, and wholly destitute of education. In reading them, it is true, I had utility, not praise, in view; I knew the world, and especially the great world, too well to be inflated with pride, or stupidly to believe in any praises which flow not from the heart, but which cannot well be refused by a well-bred audience to an author who makes no pretensions, and who fatigues himself by reading his productions for their amusement. I estimated therefore the eulogiums I received at their true value, but I knew how to appreciate, and was extremely attentive to the praise and disapprobation of *looks*, if I may be permitted to employ the expression.

Whenever twelve or fifteen individuals are assembled together, such as I have described, the general feeling which pervades this assembly will very much resemble

that of a pit in a theatre. Though not compelled to be present, and though politeness requires that they should appear to be satisfied, it is nevertheless impossible to conceal the coldness and ennui they may feel, and still more so to assume a lively interest in what is going forward, or to display an ardent curiosity to reach the development of the plot. As an auditor can neither command his features, nor fix himself to his seat, his countenance and motions must afford a sufficient indication to an author respecting the sensations which his work is calculated to produce. This was almost the sole object I had in view by reading my pieces; and I thought I could remark that during two thirds of the time my hearers gave to them an undivided attention, and that their anxiety redoubled on approaching the catastrophe. This proved that, even in the most familiar tragic subjects, a degree of suspense and uncertainty is kept up to the very conclusion. I must here also acknowledge that those tedious and languid passages, which fatigued and disgusted me on a reperusal, were done ample justice to by the eternal yawnings, involuntary coughs, and restless motions of my hearers, who in this manner afforded me, without intending it, the most salutary counsel; neither do I wish to deny that I have received the most just and excellent advice from men of letters, men of the world, and even from the ladies. The former criticised my elocution and my composition, the second entered into the merits of the plot and the adaptation of the characters, while the ladies spoke of the conduct of the passions: all these remarks proved of the greatest benefit to me; even the groaning and contortions of the ignorant part of my auditors were not destitute of utility. I listened to everything, and treasured it up in my memory. I neglected no means

of improvement, and despised not advice, from whatever quarter it came, that had the smallest tendency to improve my productions. I must add to these my confessions, that I clearly perceived a stranger like myself, who reads his works in different circles, which are not always composed of friends, must not expect wholly to escape ridicule. I repent not, however, my compliance in this respect, if it has tended to render my productions more perfect; but if no such effect has resulted from it, to the absurdity of these readings must be joined the still greater folly of causing my tragedies to be represented and published.

X.

WHILE anxiously brooding over my future literary fame, and irresolute whether I ought to commit any of my works to the press, or whether it would not be more prudent still to procrastinate their publication, a middle path presented itself: this was to procure the representation of some one of my pieces by a select company of amateurs, who performed for their own amusement in a private theatre, fitted up in the palace of the Duke of Grimaldi, the Spanish ambassador. Previous to this period, they had represented only some very indifferent translations of French tragedies and comedies. I had myself assisted at the performance of the Earl of Essex, by Corneille, in which the Duchess of Zagarolo acted the part of Queen Elizabeth very indifferently. Notwithstanding, I clearly perceived that this lady, who was extremely beautiful, and possessed great dignity of mien, fully understood the character, and that with some instruction she would become an excellent actress. Actuated by this idea, I resolved to

bring forward one of my pieces on this private theatre. I wished by this means to ascertain how far the mode of writing I had adopted, which consisted in simplicity of action, the introduction of very few personages, and that species of irregular verse which precluded the monotonous *cantilena*, as it is termed, would be attended with success. For this purpose I selected *Antigone*, the least impassioned of all my tragedies, conceiving that if it succeeded, the others, which were written in a bolder and more nervous style, would still more certainly succeed. My proposal was eagerly embraced by the noble group; but as at that time none could be found among them capable of taking a principal part, excepting the Duke of Ceri, brother to the Duchess of Zagarolo, I was compelled to assume the character of Creonte, while the Duke of Ceri undertook that of Emone; his lady played Argia, and *Antigone*, the most prominent character of the piece, fell necessarily to the share of the majestic Duchess of Zagarolo. As soon as proper arrangements could be made, the piece was immediately brought forward. I shall say nothing here respecting the performance, since it is my intention to speak more at large on this subject elsewhere.

Inflated with the success I had obtained at the commencement of 1783, I resolved to subject myself to the fiery ordeal of printing my work. Though this step then appeared to me very hazardous, I knew not to what I exposed myself, till I afterwards became acquainted with the cabals of literary men, the hatred of booksellers, the decisions of reviewers, the babbling of newspapers, and, in short, with all the train of evils to which an author subjects himself who appears before the public for the first time. So utterly were all these things then unknown to me, that I knew nothing even

of the nature of those periodical journals and reviews, which assume the privilege of criticising and passing judgment on new publications.

Finding it was difficult to obtain the sanction of the censors of the press at Rome to the printing of my works, I wrote to my friend at Siena to entreat him to take charge of them. This he not only undertook with the greatest readiness, but even promised to superintend the press, and to employ some one of my acquaintances, on whose attention I could rely, in order to accelerate the completion of the work. It was not my intention, at this time, to risk the publication of more than four of my tragedies. Of these I transmitted to my friend the manuscript, which, though accurately written and carefully corrected, was yet very deficient in clearness, elegance, and purity of style. I then was simpleton enough to suppose that the labor of an author was at an end when he had sent his manuscript to the press, but I afterwards learned to my cost that it is then only it commences.

While these four tragedies were printing, I remained at Rome in a state of the greatest anxiety and mental perturbation. Had shame not prevented me, I would have recalled my manuscript. They at length arrived in succession; the printing was very ill-executed, but my friend had attended with the greatest care to the correction of the press; and I had the mortification to perceive, in the end, that the versification was extremely barbarous. The childishness of running through the different families in Rome, and presenting them with handsomely bound copies of my tragedies, with the view of securing their approbation, occupied me several days, and rendered me not only ridiculous in the eyes of others, but even in my own. I

laid a copy at the feet of Pope Pius VI., to whom I had been presented the year before on coming to reside at Rome. It is here necessary to mention a weakness of which I was guilty during the audience which had been vouchsafed me by the Holy Father. I entertained no very profound veneration for his Holiness as Pope, and still less for Braschi as a man of letters, or the patron of literature, since I considered him as neither the one nor the other. I presented him my elegantly bound little volume, which he received with much affability. He opened the book, laid it on his table, and, turning over and over the leaves, overwhelmed me with praises. He would not permit me to kiss his foot, but, raising me from the humble posture into which I had thrown myself, he patted me on the cheek with a grace truly paternal. Notwithstanding the sonnet I had written on Rome, which stared me in the face, I replied to these compliments like a thoroughbred courtier; and taking advantage of the praise which he bestowed on *Antigone*, and the success which attended its representation, I seized the moment when his Holiness was descanting on the dignity of the tragic art, and when he inquired if I had composed any other tragedies, to reply that I had finished several, and among others *Saul*, the groundwork of which was drawn from the Bible, and that I would dedicate it to his Holiness if he would deign to grant me his permission. The Holy Father excused himself by saying that he could not agree to have any theatrical pieces dedicated to him, of whatever kind they might be. To this refusal I made no reply. I must here acknowledge, however, that I experienced two distinct and separate mortifications, which were both well merited,—the one from the refusal I had volun-

tarily sought; the other from being forced to esteem myself less than the Pope, for my cowardice, weakness, and duplicity; for unquestionably my conduct proceeded from one of these three motives, or perhaps the whole of them combined, which had induced me to offer, as a mark of respect and esteem, to dedicate my work to one whom I considered as far beneath me in the scale of real merit. It is also necessary, not to justify myself, but in order to explain the real or apparent contradiction which may be observed between my manner of thinking, perceiving, and acting, that I should here ingenuously explain the sole and true reason which determined me thus to prostitute the buskin to the tiara.

For some time past the priesthood, instigated by the brother-in-law of my adored friend, had officiously propagated many calumnies respecting the frequency of my visits to this inestimable woman. This noise daily augmented, and I endeavored, by flattering the sovereign pontiff, to secure to myself a support against the persecutions I already anticipated, and which actually burst over my head in less than a month. I even believe that the representation of Antigone, by attaching a degree of celebrity to my name, provoked and multiplied my enemies. Love then taught me cowardice and dissimulation. I wish that those who read this trait may be able to laugh at me without recognizing themselves in the picture. I inclined, both for my own profit and the benefit of others, to unveil this circumstance, which I might have buried in oblivion; withheld by shame, I never related it to a single individual, except my dearly cherished friend, a short time after it occurred. I have recorded it here for the consolation of present and future authors, who, by

some melancholy circumstance, may be forced to dishonor themselves and their profession by fulsome dedications; in short, that my enemies may say with justice and truth, if I have not debased myself by such meannesses, I owe it to my fortune, which never compelled me either to become or to appear contemptible.

At a rumor that his Holiness had ordered me to leave Rome, which was in fact not the case, though it had been credited with the greatest facility, — thanks to the liberty enjoyed in Italy, — I now determined to depart voluntarily. To this effect I addressed myself to the Sardinian minister, and entreated him to inform the secretary of state, that, having heard the calumnies which had been spread abroad, I was too much interested in the honor, the fame, and the tranquillity of the worthy and respectable woman who was the object of them, not to adopt every means in my power to put an end to such unmerited clamor; that I had therefore resolved to leave Rome for some time, and would set out on the commencement of the following month, May, 1783.

This spontaneous, and to me painful, resolution was highly gratifying to the minister, and approved by the secretary of state, the Pope himself, as well as all those who were acquainted with the real state of the case. I immediately prepared for my departure. What still farther determined me to take this step was the melancholy and terrible life which I foresaw I must have led, had I remained at Rome, after being precluded from visiting my friend at her own home. I should have been exposed to continual vexation and chagrin, had I attempted to meet her elsewhere, either openly, or employed secret means to accomplish this

end, which must have proved equally dangerous as useless. To remain at Rome without seeing each other was to me a punishment so severe, that I regarded it as more insupportable than removing to a distance, and waiting a more auspicious period to renew our intercourse.

On the 4th of May, 1783, a day which will always be recollected by me with sentiments of the most bitter sorrow, I bade adieu to that being who was dearer to my heart than all the world besides. My despair at our present separation was more terrible than on any former occasion of the same kind, as the hope of seeing her again was extremely uncertain.

For two years I remained incapable of any kind of study whatever, so different was my present forlorn state from the happiness I enjoyed during my late residence in Rome: there, the Villa Strozzi, near to the Baths of Diocletian, afforded me a delightful retreat, where I passed my mornings in study, only riding for an hour or two through the vast solitudes which in the neighborhood of Rome invite to melancholy, meditation, and poetry. In the evening I proceeded to the city, and found a relaxation from study in the society of her who constituted the charm of my existence, and contented and happy I returned to my solitude, never at a later hour than eleven o'clock. It was impossible to find in the circuit of a great city an abode more cheerful, more retired, or better suited to my taste, my character, and my pursuits. Delightful spot! the remembrance of which I shall ever cherish, and which through life I shall long to revisit.

Leaving thus my only friend, my books, my retreat, my happiness, and I may say myself, at Rome, I proceeded on my way like one deprived of reason. I took

the road to Siena, where I should be at liberty to pour my sorrows into the bosom of my friend. I neither knew nor cared where I went, nor what was to become of me. The conversation of this incomparable man afforded the only solace to my grief. Notwithstanding the strength and elevation of his own mind, he was tender, compassionate, and humane towards the weaknesses of others. It is only when weighed down by adversity that we can estimate the value of a sincere friend. I am persuaded that without the consoling cares of this worthy man I should have sunk into a state of hopeless insanity. When he beheld my truly pitiable condition, though he knew from experience the power of virtue, he did not cruelly employ cold and severe reasoning in the delirious state of my imagination. By sharing my sorrow, it gradually became assuaged. What a precious gift from heaven is a friend, who can at the same time reason and feel!

My intellectual faculties being enfeebled or torpid. I pursued no kind of study or occupation, except writing letters, of which I may literally be said to have written volumes during this third and longest separation from my lady. I knew not what I wrote: I poured forth my grief, friendship, love, rage, and all the affections with which my lacerated heart overflowed.

So indifferent was I at this period to literary fame, that the severe critiques on my different tragedies, which had been transmitted to me from Tuscany, while I was laboring under the most profound affliction at Rome, produced no more impression on my mind than if I had not been concerned in them. Some of them, though piquant, were written with urbanity, while others were extremely gross and insipid: several of

them bore the name of the author, but not a few were anonymous. They all, however, exclusively agreed to depict my style as harsh, obscure, and inflated, but without assigning any reason for this opinion, or pointing out the faults, in this respect, of any particular passages.

On arriving in Tuscany, my friend, in order to withdraw my thoughts from sorrowful recollections, read to me extracts, in the Florence and Pisa journals, of all those critiques which had been sent to me at Rome. These were the first literary journals, in any language, which had fallen into my hands. It was then only that I penetrated into the secret of this respectable art, by which different works are praised or censured according as the journalist has been bribed, flattered, forgotten, or contemned by the authors. In fact, these mercenary critics produced not the smallest effect on my mind, which was wholly absorbed in other subjects.

After a stay of three weeks at Siena, during which I confined myself solely to the society of my friend, the fear of becoming troublesome to him, as I found it impossible to occupy my mind, and an impatience for change of place, which incessantly haunted my imagination during my fits of melancholy and idleness, concurred in determining me to continue my travels. The feast of the Ascension, which I had formerly witnessed at Venice, approached, and I resolved to be present at it. In my way to this city, I passed through Florence without stopping, as I could not support the sight of a place, in my present melancholy state of mind, where I had formerly spent so many happy hours. The fatigue of travelling, and the sight of new objects, produced a salutary effect on at least my health, which

had been much injured by the grief and agitation I had suffered in the course of the last three months. At Bologna I left the direct road, with the view of visiting the tomb of our immortal poet at Ravenna, where I passed a whole day in melancholy meditation. During my journey from Siena to Venice, I daily composed one or more sonnets, replete with the most tender passion. These ideas presented themselves with such force to my imagination, that I felt myself impelled to embody them in verse. At Venice, when I first heard of the treaty of peace being concluded, by which America had stipulated for her independence, I instantly composed the fifth ode on American Independence, which terminated this little lyric poem. From Venice I proceeded to Padua, where I failed not, as I had done formerly, to visit the tomb of our master in love, the divine Petrarch. I there, as at Ravenna, consecrated a day to meditation and to verse. At Padua I became acquainted with the celebrated Cesarotti, with whose manners, vivacity, and politeness, I was as much delighted as with the perusal of his elegant translation of Ossian.

From Padua I returned to Bologna by Ferrara, in order to finish my fourth poetic pilgrimage, by viewing the tomb and the manuscripts of Ariosto. At Rome I had several times visited the mausoleum of Tasso, as well as the spot where he first drew his breath at Sorrento, to which place I went express during my last visit to Naples. These four poets have always been, and will continue to be, prized by me above every other in our divine language. It appears to me that they afford a model of every species of poetry, except colloquial blank verse, which is particularly adapted to subjects on which they treat, only requiring to be

modified in a different manner. For sixteen years that I have read these works, they have always appeared new to me: on each perusal I have discovered fresh beauties in those parts of them which are truly excellent; and even the faults of such authors are not destitute of utility. I dare not here affirm, with blind fanaticism, that they have never written indifferent, and even detestable verses, I only contend that valuable lessons may be learned even from their defects. In forming a judgment of their merits, it is necessary, however, to enter into their intentions, and be well acquainted with their motives: it is necessary also not only to comprehend and taste their beauties, but to feel them. From Bologna, still suffering the most profound melancholy, I proceeded to Milan, on a visit to my dear friend the Abbé Caluso, who was in the country with his nephews at his beautiful *château* of Masino, a short distance from Vercelli. Here I remained five or six days. Being so near Turin, I was ashamed not to visit my sister. Thither, therefore, I went, in company with my friend. We remained only a single night, and next morning returned to his house.

From Masino I returned to Milan, where I passed the month of July. Here I frequently saw the original author of *Il Giorno*, the real precursor of Italian satire. From this celebrated author I endeavored to learn in what the principal defect of my tragic style consisted. I inquired with an anxious desire to be instructed, and listened to him with the utmost attention. With the greatest readiness Parini bestowed on me much excellent advice respecting different points, which, however, taken together, could not constitute what is termed style, but only some of its parts. Neither Pa-

rini, Cesarotti, nor any other of the learned men whom I interrogated on this subject, during my journey through Lombardy, with all the ardor and humility of a novice, were, however, able to point out to me what constituted the real defects of my style, — defects which I was not myself, at the time, sensible of, and which I only saw and corrected after several years of labor and uncertainty. On the whole, however, my tragedies had more success beyond the Apennines than in Tuscany: my style was even censured with less animosity and more judgment. The same circumstance occurred at Rome and Naples, among the few readers which I found in these cities. It seems then an ancient privilege of Tuscany alone to encourage, in this manner, Italian writers who compose only academic discourses, destitute of sense and humor.

XI.

AT the commencement of August I left Milan, and set out for Tuscany. I took a new route, which led from Modena to Pistoja. It was when travelling along this magnificent and picturesque road that I first attempted the composition of some epigrams. I was fully persuaded that if we had no pointed, severe, or well-turned epigrams, it could not be attributable to the genius of the Italian language, which is the most vigorous and concise of any with which I am acquainted. The Florentine pedants, by whom I was surrounded as I approached Pistoja, furnished an ample subject on which to exercise my new art. I remained a few days at Florence, and, assuming the harmlessness of a lamb, I visited several of them, in order either to gain instruction or learn to laugh. I profited very little

in the first respect, but in the second I found ample field for merriment. These gentlemen modestly gave me to understand, or, to speak more properly, made me clearly perceive, that if I had put my manuscripts into their hands to correct before sending them to the press, it would have greatly enhanced their value. They entertained me with a thousand impertinences of a similar kind. I inquired with the greatest patience, if I had committed any offence against the purity and analogy of words, or against grammar, which ought always to be held sacred; or, in short, if I had introduced any solecisms or barbarisms into my composition, or had deviated from the rules to be observed in the structure of the verse. But so ignorant were they of the art they professed to criticise, that they could not point out to me the precise places where those faults were to be found; yet they persevered in affirming that many grammatical errors might doubtless be detected. They contented themselves, however, with censuring my employment of what they denominated obsolete terms, and with the harshness, obscurity, and too great conciseness of my style. Enriched in this manner with such rare knowledge, instructed and enlightened by these consummate masters of the tragic art, I returned to Siena. There I resolved, in order to assuage the grief which constantly haunted my steps, to continue the printing of my tragedies under my own inspection. In giving an account to my friend of the instruction I had derived from our different Italian oracles, and especially those of Florence and Pisa, we amused ourselves at their expense, while furnishing them with the means of retaliating by the publication of my other tragedies. In the mean time I urged forward the printing with so much ardor, though rather too precipi-

tately, that before the end of September, that is, in less than two months, six new tragedies were ready for publication, which, joined to the first four, formed the whole of this first edition.

These six tragedies, even in the eyes of my detractors, appeared superior to the four former. At that period I did not wish to add to them the four others which still remained in manuscript, particularly the Conspiracy of the Pazzi and Mary Stuart, as it would then only have augmented my embarrassment and that of the individual who interested me more than even myself. The labor of correcting the proofs, which were sent to me very rapidly, and to which I dedicated my attention immediately after dinner, brought on a fit of the gout, which confined me for fifteen days, during which I suffered the greatest torment, though I obstinately resisted taking to my bed. I had the year before experienced a slight attack of this disease during my stay at Rome, and this second fit convinced me that I should never be long free from it during the latter part of my life. The immoderate sorrow I had experienced, joined to incessant and severe mental exertion, were doubtless the two causes which had produced this malady, which was always however successfully combated by my extreme sobriety; so that at this period, 1783, the paroxysms of my gout, to which I have carefully attended, have never been either very severe or frequent.

As, however, the object of all my wishes, the reunion with the mistress of my affections, could not be realized this summer, I resolved to take a journey to France and England, in order if possible to assuage the sorrow and agitation I experienced at this disappointment. I had neither the wish nor curiosity again

to revisit these countries, with which I was so much disgusted during my second travels; but travelling was become necessary in order to alleviate my sufferings. I determined to purchase as many English horses as possible. This rage for horses, which revived occasionally, was so strong that my noble coursers frequently even overcame my taste for books and poetry. At this moment, when my heart was lacerated with sorrow, the Muses maintained but little sway over my mind. The poet was transformed into a horse-dealer. I set out for London with my imagination filled with noble heads, fine necks, and well-turned haunches, wholly indifferent whether my tragedies appeared or not. I wasted more than eight months in these trifles, without pursuing any literary occupation whatever, scarcely ever opening a book. The only ones on which I sometimes cast my eyes were my four favorite poets, which I alternately put in my pocket, and which were become my inseparable companions during my long journeys. All my thoughts dwelt on the mistress of my heart, and my grief at our separation was from time to time depicted in melancholy verses.

XII.

IN the month of December I prepared to pass over to England. The men of letters in France are for the most part strangers to Italian literature: it was impossible for me to take any part in their conversation; I nevertheless was irritated at my own folly, in having again subjected myself to the necessity of speaking and listening to their nasal and anti-Tuscan jargon; I therefore hastened my departure. Balloons were at this period the rage of the day. I witnessed two of

the first and most successful aerostatic experiments. In the former of these the balloon was filled with rarified air, and in the latter with inflammable gas; in each of them were seated two individuals. What a majestic and noble spectacle, more fitted for poetry than history! a discovery that may be termed sublime, when the means have been found of rendering it useful.

No sooner had I reached London, than I purchased first a race-horse, then two, and shortly after one for the saddle, and at last six carriage-horses. I had the misfortune to lose several colts successively; but as one died I purchased two. This inordinate desire, which had lain dormant for six years, stimulated by privations, was again rekindled. In the pursuit of this favorite amusement I disregarded every obstacle, and when only five horses remained out of the ten I had purchased, I made up the number to fourteen, in relation to my having written fourteen tragedies, though I had resolved only to finish twelve. The latter exhausted my mind, the former drained my purse. But the pleasure which my horses afforded me restored my health, and inspired me with courage to labor at other tragedies and other works. I did not therefore regret the vast sums which I had expended, since I thus procured to myself the restoration of my health and vivacity. I was much better at expending than adapting my expenditure to my income. During the first three years after the donation of my property, I had lived in the most sordid manner, and during the three latter with decent moderation and frugality. By this means I found myself in possession of a large sum of money from the accumulation of my yearly income in France, which had remained untouched during this period. I consumed a great part of these savings in

purchasing and in transporting my fourteen friends to Italy, and their maintenance for five years absorbed the remainder. I sustained no farther losses among these, my favorites, after removing them from their native isle; and so much had I become attached to these animals, that I could not resolve to part with a single one. Surrounded by my horses, my mind dejected by the absence of her whose presence alone stimulated me to every great and noble action, I avoided society, and sought acquaintance with no one. I either remained with my horses, or in scribbling letter upon letter. In this manner I spent four months in London, and thought no more of my tragedies than if they had never been written. Sometimes, indeed, the whimsical relation which existed between their number and that of my horses presented itself to my imagination, and I said to myself with a smile, "Thou hast gained a horse by each tragedy," in allusion to the flagellation inflicted by our Italian pedagogues on boys who had neglected their exercises in composition.*

I thus vegetated for several months in a state of the most complete idleness, neglecting even my favorite poets. My inventive faculties became so benumbed that during my abode in London I only composed one sonnet, and two on setting out from that capital. Accompanied by my numerous caravan, I arrived at Calais, whence I went to Paris; and afterwards, proceeding by the way of Lyons and Turin, repaired to Siena. This journey, which I have described in three lines, was extremely difficult from the great number of my horses. I

* In Italy, when any of the boys belonging to a class commits a fault, the schoolmaster orders him to be hoisted on the back of one of his comrades; and in this posture inflicts on him a certain number of strokes with a cane, which is termed *giving him a horse*.

every day, and indeed at every step, experienced a degree of vexation and embarrassment which imbittered the pleasure I should otherwise have derived from my cavalry. One coughed, another would not eat, a third fell lame, a fourth became affected with the farcy. It was a continued series of disasters, in which I was the greatest sufferer. In the passage from Dover they were obliged to be placed like a flock of sheep, by way of ballast in the hold of the vessel. Here they were so much exhausted, and became so dirty, that their bright bay color could not be distinguished.

Of all the enterprises which I ever undertook, the most difficult and heroic was my passage over the Alps, between Lansleberg and Novalaise. I found the greatest difficulty in securing these unwieldy and bulky animals from the danger they ran of being hurled headlong from the frightful precipices we had to scale during this perilous journey. The reader will, I hope, pardon me these details, and the pleasure which I derive from describing my efforts and success. Those to whom they may prove displeasing may pass them over, while those who read them may judge whether I was not better able to conduct the march of my fourteen horses, in these straits of Thermopylæ, than the five acts of a tragedy.

My horses, thanks to their youth, my paternal cares, and the little fatigue they underwent, were so full of health and spirits, that it was extremely difficult to conduct them over this mountainous district: I therefore took with me to Lansleberg as many men as I had horses; so that each horse had its conductor, who held him close by the bridle. They were fastened together by the tail, and between every three I had placed one of the guides, who on a mule guarded the three which

preceded him. In the midst of this cavalcade was the farrier of Lansleberg, provided with nails and shoes, in order to lend prompt assistance to those which might be unshod, and which was the more to be dreaded from the huge stones over which they had to tread, whilst I myself, in quality of commander in chief of the expedition, rode in the rear mounted on Frontin, the smallest and nimblest of my horses. By my side rode two agile and nimble-footed aides-de-camp, whom I despatched to the centre, to the front, and to the rear with my orders. In this manner we arrived without accident at the summit of Mont Cenis; when we had to descend on the Italian side, I dreaded the mettle of my horses, from the rapidity of their descent. I changed my situation, and, alighting from my horse, walked in the front with the view of retarding the velocity of their march. I placed at the head of this phalanx the heaviest and least spirited of my animals; my aides-de-camp ran before and behind, in order to keep them always at a proper distance from each other: yet, notwithstanding all these attentions, several had their feet unshod; but the dispositions that had been made were so skilful, that the farrier quickly lent the necessary assistance, and they arrived at Novalaise in very good condition, and with only one lamed among the whole troop. These trifling details will prove of importance to those who may have to transport horses over the Alps, or other mountainous regions. As for me, after having so ably directed this passage, I regarded myself as scarcely inferior to Hannibal, who only passed a little more to the south with his slaves and his elephants. If his enterprise was performed at the expense of much vinegar, mine likewise cost me much wine; for my whole suite, consisting of guides, farriers, horse-dealers, and aides-de-camp, drank at pleasure.

With my head filled with follies of every kind, among which my horses alone kept me alive, and void of every useful idea, I arrived, seven years after my expatriation, at Turin, where I remained nearly three weeks. I found myself rejuvenated in body, but unfortunately my intellects also partook too much of the child. My coursers had reconducted me with rapid strides to my primitive ignorance: my mind was so rusted for want of exertion, that I believed it incapable either of invention or composition.

XIII.

DURING my stay at Turin I enjoyed some pleasure, but I also experienced much sorrow. It is unquestionably delightful, after a long separation, to behold the friends of our early years, the places where we have gambolled during childhood, the trees, even the stones, in short, all these objects from which sprang our first ideas and our first attachments. But how mortifying to me, on meeting with the companions of my youth, to perceive that they avoided me, or when that was impossible, only saluted me with the most frigid air, or turned aside from me with disdain! Far from having done them any injury, I had always treated them with distinguished friendship and cordiality. This conduct hurt me greatly, and would have done still more so, had I not been informed by those who still felt some kindness towards me, that I was thus treated by some because I had written tragedies, by others because I had travelled much, and by a third class because I had returned to my country with such a number of horses; and a thousand similar trifling reasons. These trifles will doubtless be ex-

cused by any one acquainted with human nature, since he must have impartially examined his own heart; nevertheless, they ought as much as possible to be avoided, by exiling ourselves forever from the country where we were born, if we do not intend to conform to the manners of others, or cannot make them acquiesce in the propriety of ours, especially if that country be small, and the inhabitants indolent, or if we have had the misfortune involuntarily to wound their self-love, by endeavoring to soar above them in any respect whatever.

While at Turin I was compelled to undergo a still more severe mortification, from the indispensable necessity of being presented to his majesty. He could not regard me with a favorable eye, since I had tacitly contemned him in quitting his states: nevertheless, the customs of the country, and the rank which I held, obliged me to appear at court, if I wished to avoid the imputation of insolence and folly. My brother-in-law, who was first lord in waiting, inquired with great anxiety whether or not I meant to be presented. I immediately tranquillized him on this subject, assuring him that such was my intention. He named an early day for this ceremony, to which I made no objection; and the following morning I waited on the minister. My brother-in-law had informed me that the government was very amicably disposed towards me; that I should be graciously received; and that some idea had even been entertained of offering me an employment. This favor, which was wholly unexpected, and which I certainly did not merit, made me tremble; but the information was of use to me in this respect, as it prepared me in what manner to act: I therefore informed the minister, that in passing through Turin, I con-

ceived it my duty to wait on him, and entreat that he would present me, with the sole intention of offering my respectful homage to his majesty. The minister received me in the most flattering manner: at first he only spoke vaguely on the subject, but at length openly declared that the king would derive much satisfaction from seeing me settled in my native country; that his majesty was willing to accept of my services; and many other speeches of a similar import. I immediately cut him short, by replying that I intended returning to Tuscany, to pursue my studies, and to superintend the printing of my works; that I was in my thirty-fifth year, an age when our habits are fixed; that I had hitherto devoted my time to literary occupations, and that it was my intention to spend the remainder of my days in similar pursuits. He replied that the profession of an author was highly respectable, but that there were certainly situations much more important and honorable which I was worthy to fill. I politely thanked him, but persisted in declining them. I had even the moderation and generosity not to mortify this worthy man, as he certainly deserved, by making him understand what I thought of diplomatic employments, which were certainly much less important to me than my dramatic works, or even those of others: but it is impossible to enlighten such people; they neither can nor will be convinced. As for me, who am naturally disinclined to disputation, especially with those whose ideas are in every respect dissimilar to my own, I contented myself in the present case with positively declining every situation. The minister had most probably informed his majesty of my refusal, for on the following day, when I was presented, he said not a word on the

subject, but received me with that courteous affability so natural to him. It was Victor Amadeus III., son of Charles Emanuel, in whose reign I was born. Though very far from being partial to kings in general, and particularly to despots, I must here confess that this family, taken on the whole, deserve some praise, especially when compared with those who at present occupy the thrones of Europe. Hence I experienced no aversion in particular towards this dynasty. The reigning monarch, as well as his predecessor, were well-meaning men: the conduct of Amadeus was praiseworthy and exemplary; in one word, he did more good than evil to his country. Nevertheless, when it is recollected that the good and evil which kings perform depend on their own will alone, we must naturally shudder, and if possible fly from their power. It was in this manner I acted on this occasion. After having remained at Turin a sufficient length of time to see my relations and acquaintances, after having passed a short time as usefully as agreeably with my inestimable friend the Abbé Caluso, who partly restored me to myself, and drew me from the stables, I left that city.

During my abode at Turin I happened, contrary to my inclinations, to be present at the representation of my Virginia. It was brought out at the same theatre where, nine years before, my Cleopatra had been acted, and by nearly as able performers. One of my academic friends had prepared everything for this representation before my arrival, which was wholly unexpected. He, however, requested me to assign to the actors their different parts, as I formerly had done for Cleopatra; but my powers, and above all my pride, being augmented, I refused to lend my aid. I was

well acquainted with the audience, and especially with the actors, and I wished not to be in any way implicated in their incapacity, which was evident to me even before having heard them. I knew that it was necessary to commence with an impossibility, that of making them speak and pronounce the Italian instead of the Venetian; to make it appear as if the parts were uttered by them and not by the prompter; in short, that it would be necessary to make them understand (to feel would be requiring too much) the sensations they ought to excite in the minds of their auditors. Such being my conviction, it will be obvious that my refusal was not unreasonable, and my pride not misplaced. I insisted that my friend should act as he thought proper, only promising to attend the performance, from which I became convinced that the praise or censure of an Italian audience should be regarded with equal indifference. Virginia obtained the same reception as Cleopatra, and like it was given out for the following evening; but, as it may readily be supposed, I was not present at this second representation.

From that moment the illusions of fame, which I had fondly cherished, began gradually to dissipate; nevertheless, I did not relinquish my design of prosecuting two or three different kinds of new works. I resolved to bestow on them all the care and attention of which I was capable, that in my dying hour I might enjoy the consolation of having done everything in my power to secure my own reputation, as well as to improve the dramatic art. With respect to the judgment of my contemporaries, in the present state of Italian criticism, I am equally indifferent to their praise or censure. That praise which is founded on no just

principles does not indeed deserve the name, and can never be coveted by any author of discernment. Neither can I term censure that indiscriminate desire to discover faults, without pointing out the means of remedying them in future.

During the representation of *Virginia* I suffered far more intense anxiety than when I had formerly witnessed the first performance of my *Cleopatra*; and my feelings on these two occasions proceeded from very different causes. By those who are enthusiastically attached to the dramatic art, these feelings will readily be understood, without any further attempt on my part to explain them, whereas on the contrary no elucidation could render them comprehensible to those who have never felt similar emotions.

On leaving Turin, I spent three days at Asti with my worthy and respectable mother; on separating we shed a torrent of tears, — both felt a melancholy foreboding that this would be our last meeting. I will not affirm that I felt for her all the filial affection she merited. I had quitted her at nine years of age, and from that early period had never again seen her except for a few hours on a transient visit: but my esteem, my gratitude, and veneration for this excellent parent have ever been, and will always continue unbounded. May Heaven grant her a long series of years, since she so worthily employs them in assuaging the sorrows of those around her! She loved me beyond expression, and much more than I deserved. Thus, as the moment of separation drew nigh, I could not behold her violent grief without participating in it; and the remembrance of these afflicting moments will ever remain indelibly engraven on my mind.

No sooner was I beyond the states of the Sardinian

monarch than it appeared to me as if I respired more freely, the remembrance of my natal yoke weighed so heavily on me, though I had already broken it. While I remained there, every time I was obliged to meet with those who had any influence in the government of the country, I regarded myself more as a slave than as a freeman. I oft recalled to mind the beautiful speech of Pompey, when he sought refuge in Egypt: "He who enters the house of a tyrant becomes a slave if he be not so already." Hence the man, who either through indolence or a love of pleasure returns to the prison he had left, well deserves to meet with jailers, and be retained against his inclination.

On approaching Modena, the intelligence which I received respecting my fair friend by turns filled me with grief and hope, and kept my mind in a state of the utmost uncertainty. The last news from Piacenza informed me that she was at length freed from the control of her husband, and had quitted Rome. This transported me with rapture, since Rome was the only city where I durst not visit her. On the other hand, Decency, with her leaden fetters, prevented me from following her. After innumerable difficulties and sacrifices, she had at last obtained permission from her brother-in-law and the Pope to visit the waters of Baden in Switzerland. Her health had been greatly injured by the grief to which her mind had been long a prey. In the month of June, 1784, she accordingly left Rome, and, coasting along the shores of the Adriatic, by Bologna, Mantua, and Trent, had taken the way of Tyrol, while I, quitting Turin by Piacenza, Modena, and Pistoja, returned to Siena. The idea of being so near her, and yet that in a short time we should be again far distant from each other, enchanted and agonized me at

the same time. I might have sent my carriage and domestics forward, taken post, and crossed the country to join her, — I should at least have beheld her! I desired, I feared, I hoped, I wished — I knew not what — anxieties which can only be known to those who love as I loved. Duty at last obtained the victory: my anxiety for her reputation overbalanced every other consideration, and, by turns irritated or dissolved in tears, I left the great road, and, groaning under the weight of my dear-bought victory, I arrived at Siena, after ten months' absence. Here I received from my friend Gandellini those consolations which were necessary to make me endure life, and again awaken hope in my woe-worn bosom.

XIV.

I SEDULOUSLY kept up a correspondence with my inestimable friend. The tenor of her letters gradually augmented my hopes of being again permitted to revisit her. This desire at length so fully occupied my mind, and became so violent, that I could no longer resist it. I imparted my intentions to no one but Gandellini, and, pretending to take a journey to Venice, I set out on the 4th of August for Germany; a day, alas! the bitter recollection of which will never be blotted from my memory. While proceeding, intoxicated with joy, to meet the dear object of my affections, I knew not this was the last time I should ever embrace my highly valued friend; I little thought when I bade him adieu only for six weeks that it was to be an eternal one. I never recollect this heart-rending event without shedding many a bitter tear.

Having once again commenced traveller, I proceeded

by the delightful and classical route of Pistoja to Modena. After passing rapidly through Mantua, Trent, and Innspruck, I pursued my way through Suabia, to Colmar in Upper Alsace, on the left bank of the Rhine. Near this city I at length met her whom I so anxiously sought, and from whom I had been separated sixteen months. Though I had performed this journey in twelve days, and rode post, my progress did not keep pace with my wishes. During this journey a poetic mania seized me, which involuntarily impelled me to compose three or four sonnets daily. I pursued with transport the route which my fair friend had taken two months before. With a heart overflowing with joy, I indulged myself in writing burlesque poetry. Of this kind was an epistle to Gandellini, in which I detailed the method it behooved him to pursue in the care of my dearly beloved horses. The rage for horses constituted, as I have already said, my third passion; I should blush if I had termed it the second: it is fit that the Muses should precede Pegasus.

This somewhat tedious epistle, which I afterwards printed among other poetical effusions, constituted my first and almost only attempt at burlesque poetry. Though very far from excelling in this species of composition, I yet flattered myself that I was no stranger to its distinguishing characteristics. This, however, was not sufficient to produce excellence; I did the best in my power.

It was on the 16th of August that I arrived at the house of my fair friend, with whom I spent two months, which flew swiftly away. When blessed with her society I found myself again restored to life, and become a new man. Fifteen days had scarcely elapsed, when I began again to compose tragedies, to

which I had not devoted myself for the two last years. On finishing *Saul*, I had determined to quit the buskin, and nevermore to resume it. I felt myself now, however, involuntarily constrained to write, all at once, three other tragedies; *Agis*, *Sophonisba*, and *Myrrha*. The idea of the two former had often presented itself to my mind, but I had hitherto always repelled it. At length it took such possession of my imagination, that I proceeded to sketch these tragedies, yet I trusted that I should assume sufficient resolution not to develop them. I had never thought of *Myrrha*; a subject, which, as being founded on incestuous passion, I conceived ill adapted for tragedy. I had read in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* the animated and sublime address of *Myrrha* to her nurse. It had melted me into tears, and suddenly inspired me with the idea of a tragedy. I conceived the subject might be rendered extremely original and interesting, if the author handled it in such a manner as gradually to unfold to his auditors the dreadful and conflicting tumults which overwhelmed the pure but impassioned soul of *Myrrha*, who was much more unfortunate than culpable; without daring to avow her execrable passion to herself, much less to others. In short, I perceived that it was necessary to display, by action alone, what is related in Ovid, and that the heroine must execute her purpose without divulging it. I soon also became convinced that I should have much difficulty to encounter in preserving, through five acts, the terrible fluctuation of *Myrrha*'s soul, so as to give interest to the piece, without the introduction of subordinate incidents. This difficulty, which I felt not only during the progress, but even after the termination of the work, served, however, rather to stimulate than repress my ardor in its execu-

tion. I must leave to others to decide how far I have succeeded in overcoming it.

These three new productions served to rekindle in my mind the love of glory, which I no longer thirsted after, but with the view of sharing it with her who was dearer to me than life. Thus occupied, did I enjoy in the society of my friend, during one month, a happiness only alloyed by the sorrowful anticipation of our approaching separation. As if, however, this inevitable misfortune was not of itself sufficient to overwhelm me, cruel fate decreed that I should pay dearly for the fleeting happiness I had enjoyed. By letters received from Siena, in the course of a single week I learned the afflicting intelligence first of the death of Gandellini's younger brother, and afterwards of his own. Had I not been at the house of my fair friend, on receiving this sudden and unexpected shock, I know not what effects might have resulted from the excess of my sorrow. Nothing tends so powerfully to mitigate our grief, on such melancholy occasions, as the society of a beloved friend, who participates in our afflictions. My fair friend herself knew Gandellini, and was much attached to him. In the preceding year, after having accompanied me to Genoa, he had returned to Tuscany, and afterwards visited Rome, for the express purpose of being introduced to her acquaintance. He remained there several months, during which he seldom quitted her even for a single day, often going in company with her to view the prodigies of the fine arts, which she was never tired of contemplating, and the merits of which she knew so well how to appreciate. She did not therefore mourn his loss on my account alone, but also on her own, knowing by experience the value of the friend whom we had lost. This misfortune inter-

rupted our happiness during the short period we remained together, and rendered our separation still more afflicting. The dreadful day at length arrived, and it behooved us to submit to fate. Gloomy despondency took possession of my mind, on finding myself not only separated from the woman I adored, and without knowing for how long a time, but also deprived, alas, forever! of an inestimable friend. Every step I advanced, during this same route, which lately charmed my sorrow, now only served to redouble it. Oppressed and weighed down by grief, except composing a few verses, I did nothing but weep during my way to Siena, which I reached in the beginning of November. The relatives of my friend, between whom and me a reciprocal attachment subsisted on his account, contributed also greatly to augment my sorrow, by their too great readiness to satisfy my anxiety to be informed of every particular respecting that mournful event. I trembled, and though eager to know all the circumstances, I yet avoided to hear them. I returned no more, as may be readily imagined, to this abode of mourning, and never since have I had the resolution to re-enter it.

XV.

IN the mean time my fair friend, having crossed the Alps, had also entered Italy by the way of Turin. She proceeded to Genoa, and from thence to Bologna, which she reached in December, and where, under the pretext of the advanced state of the season, she proposed to pass the winter. In this way, without quitting the Papal territories, she excused herself from returning to her former prison at Rome. Thus, then, while I continued at Pisa, and she at Bologna, did we

remain separated, though so near to each other, with the Apennines only intervening betwixt us. From this I experienced much consolation and suffering at the same time. Though I kept up a regular correspondence with this amiable woman, I never attempted in any way to visit her. I dreaded the tittle-tattle of the small Italian cities, where those who are at all removed above the vulgar are particularly exposed to the observations of the idle and malicious. I spent then the whole winter at Pisa, without experiencing any other consolation than that which I derived from frequently receiving the letters of my inestimable friend. My time was wholly occupied in attending to my horses, for I never opened a book of any kind, not even those which had been the inseparable companions of my travels. Oppressed by lassitude at those hours when I could neither mount my horse nor play the coachman, I endeavored to take up a book, and especially in bed on awaking in the morning. In this way I read through the letters of the younger Pliny, in which I was equally delighted with the elegance of the style, as with the knowledge they displayed of the manners of the Romans. I discovered also throughout the work indications of an upright mind, and of a character at once amiable and exalted. I next entered on the perusal of the Panegyric of Trajan, a work which I knew only by name. After reading a few pages, finding no internal evidence of its having been written by the author of the letters, and still less by the supposed friend of Tacitus, I experienced an emotion of indignation, and immediately threw the book aside, and, seating myself, I seized my pen in a rage, exclaiming in an audible voice, "My dear Pliny, hadst thou been in reality the friend, the rival and admirer of Tacitus, thus wouldst thou have

spoken of Trajan"; and without thought or reflection, I immediately wrote down, like a fool, whatever flowed from my pen, till I had filled four large pages of paper in my usual small hand. At length, wearied, and recovering from my paroxysm of enthusiasm, I laid down my pen, and during the remainder of the day thought no more on the subject. On the following morning I again took up my Pliny, with the view of continuing the perusal of his panegyric, but after reading a few pages, I threw it aside as before, and again taking up what I had written, felt myself highly pleased with it, and more inspired than on the preceding day. I arranged and distributed my subject as well as I could, and continued without intermission to write every morning successively as much as was admissible with the weakness of my sight, which usually became cloudy after two hours' incessant labor. I reflected, however, on it during the rest of the day, as I generally do when I find myself seized with the mania of writing on any particular subject. It occupied me five mornings, from the 13th to the 17th of March, and I made very few alterations in the original manuscript while it was at press.

This work so completely riveted my attention as greatly to mitigate my mental sufferings. I then became convinced by experience, that in order to enable me to bear up against, and finally to overcome the grief with which my heart was oppressed, it was necessary to rouse and occupy myself by some literary pursuit: but as my mind never proved subservient to the control of my will, I could not have combined two ideas together, however much I might have been disposed to write a panegyric on Trajan, till I felt the necessary impulse. Thus, in order to occupy my mind, and beguile my

sorrow, I sought the means of doing violence to my inclinations, by entering on some work which required patience. Again taking up Sallust, which I had translated ten years before, with a view to exercise my mind, I recopied it with the Latin text before me and seriously set about correcting it, in the hope of rendering it more perfect. As my mind, however, was incapable of regular and steady application, I made little progress in this undertaking. I perceived, on the contrary, that during the delirium of a preoccupied and wounded mind, it is much easier to conceive and imagine a short and impassioned work, than to sit down calmly to polish what we have already composed. While the mind is engaged in the work of correction, it readily wanders to other subjects; but invention is like a fever, during the access of which the mind is so completely abstracted as to be insensible to everything else. Quitting Sallust, therefore, and putting him aside, to be resumed at a more auspicious period, I continued my Essays on Government and Literature, the plan of which I had sketched some years before at Florence. I wrote the whole of the first book, and two or three chapters of the second.

When I published the preceding summer, on my return from England, the third volume of my tragedies, I transmitted copies of it to several of the learned men of Italy, and among others to Cesarotti, whom I entreated at the same time to give me his opinion respecting the style, composition, and conduct of the work. In consequence of this request, I received from him in April a letter, interspersed with critical remarks on the tragedies in question. I wrote him a short answer in return, subjoining a few notes to his observations, which might easily have been confuted, and entreating

him to point out, or to furnish me himself, with some model for dramatic composition. I must here observe, that Cesarotti, who has conceived and executed with so much ability his sublime version of Ossian, when I requested him, two years before, to point out to me some model for colloquial blank verse, mentioned his own translations from the French, such as the Semiramis and Mahomet of Voltaire, which had been published long before, and virtually proposed them as suited to answer my purpose. As these translations are in the hands of every one, it would be superfluous here to add any reflections on this subject. Every one may compare his tragic works with mine, and form their own judgment: they may also compare the epic poetry of this author in his Ossian, and judge whether it bears characteristic marks of a similar origin. This fact will serve, however, to demonstrate what a miserable being is man, and especially an author,—we have hands, a palette, and pencil, to delineate others, but possess not a mirror to recognize ourselves.

XVI.

MY fair friend set out from Bologna in April, and took the road to Paris. She could not have made a more appropriate choice for a permanent residence than France, where she had numerous relatives and friends. She remained at Paris till the latter end of August, when she returned to Alsace, and occupied the same country-house where I visited her the preceding year. As for myself, I set out early in September, and, transported with the most lively joy, crossed the Tyrolese Alps. The loss of my friend Gandellini, and the resolution my fair friend had taken to abandon Italy, determined me to quit it

likewise. Though it was neither consonant to my wishes, nor consistent with propriety, that we should inhabit the same dwelling, I was yet solicitous to fix my residence as near to her as possible, or at least that the Alps should not intervene between us. I then put all my cavalry in motion, which safely arrived a month after me in Alsace, where I found everything I possessed, excepting my books, of which I had left the greatest part behind me at Rome. The happiness which resulted from this second meeting continued only two months, as my friend found herself under the necessity of spending the winter at Paris. I attended her as far as Strasburg, where for the third time I was compelled to tear myself from her society. While she pursued her route, I returned to my former residence. Though deeply afflicted at our separation, yet my sorrow was not so extreme as that I had formerly experienced on similar occasions, because I was now nearer, and could visit her without obstacle or dread of injuring her. Besides, my mind anticipated the pleasure of her rejoining me during the following summer. These hopes infused a balm into my wounded mind, and lightened it so effectually, that I once more resigned myself to the influence of the Muses. During this winter I performed more literary labor than I had ever done before within so short a period. The abstraction of my mind, uninterrupted by dissipation and chagrin, appeared at once to shorten and multiply the hours. Immediately on fixing myself in my retirement, I commenced the development of *Agis*, which I had previously sketched during the last December at Pisa; but having become disgusted with it, which never occurs to me when I originate an idea myself, I had thrown it aside. I now, however, happily finished it, as well as *Sophonisba* and

Myrrha. In January I likewise completed the second and third part of the *Essays on Government and Literature*. At this time I also devised and composed a dialogue to the ever-cherished memory of my inestimable friend Gandellini, an homage which I severely reproached myself for having so long neglected. I moreover conceived and versified the lyric part of the melodrama of *Abel*, a species of composition respecting which I shall speak hereafter, if health and opportunity be allowed me to execute what I propose. Having returned to the composition of *vése*, I finished my little poem without farther interruption. I besides revised and corrected the three other cantos, which, as before mentioned, I had written in detached portions during the last ten years, as may be inferred by a want of uniformity in the poem itself; a fault seldom discoverable among those with which my other productions abound.

I had scarcely finished this poem, when I received a letter from my fair friend, whose correspondence always gave me ineffable delight, in which she casually informed me that she had been lately present at the representation of the *Brutus* of Voltaire, which afforded her the highest gratification. I had myself seen it nearly ten years before, but I remembered little or nothing of the piece. I instantly felt myself inspired with a principle of emulation, and mentally ejaculated: "The *Brutus*! the *Brutus* of Voltaire! I will also compose a *Brutus*, but instead of one I shall introduce two; and it will be seen whether I be not equally qualified to write on such a subject as a French plebeian, who during seventy years subscribed himself 'Voltaire, Gentleman in ordinary to the king.'" I said not a word of my intention to any one, not even to my friend when replying to her letter, but instantly conceived my two *Brutus*es, such

as they afterwards appeared. In this way was I led to break through the resolution I had taken not to write another tragedy, and from twelve they at length amounted to nineteen. Upon this Brutus, I renewed to Apollo the solemn oath which I had formerly taken, and which assuredly I shall never break, having for my guaranties the years which have rolled over my head, and so many things still left to execute, if health and opportunity are allowed me to perform them.

I passed five or six months in the country in a state of almost uninterrupted abstraction. It was my regular custom, as soon as I rose in the morning, to write long letters of five or six pages to my female friend; and afterwards to pursue my literary avocations, which were for the most part protracted till two or three in the afternoon. Lastly, I went out and took an airing for two hours, either on horseback or in my carriage. As my mind was continually engaged, either in poetizing, thinking on the mistress of my affections, or on something else, I derived little advantage from these excursions, which, instead of amusing and relieving my mind, served still farther to fatigue and exhaust it. This mode of life brought on a violent attack of the gout, which, for the first time, confined me to my bed, and subjected me, during fifteen days, to the most excruciating sufferings. Thus were my literary pursuits, which I had resumed with so much ardor, disagreeably interrupted. Unquestionably, I should never have been able to support the recluse and studious life I led, had it not been for my horses, which induced me to take both air and exercise. Such occasional excursions, however, would have been insufficient to counteract the bad effects of such unremitting mental exertions; and if the gout had not afforded me a seasonable respite, by forcing

me to suspend my labors, I might probably have either become insane, or sunk through mere weakness, as both appetite and sleep had in a great measure forsaken me. Through the influence of repose and a proper regimen, my health, however, became again restored about the month of May. Some circumstances having occurred to prevent my fair friend returning to the country, whose presence was my only worldly consolation, I fell into a profound melancholy, which so clouded my understanding as to render me nearly incapable of engaging in any literary pursuit till towards the end of August, when, on the arrival of my friend, all my evils suddenly took to flight and disappeared. As soon as my health was re-established, I forgot the sorrows produced by her absence, which fortunately was the last. Resuming again my dramatic occupations, I pursued them with such ardor that, about the middle of December, when we departed for Paris, I had finished the versification of *Agis*, *Sophonisba*, and *Myrrha*. I had also developed the two *Brutuses*, and written my first satire, a species of composition in which I had not succeeded nine years before at Florence. At that period, being equally ignorant of language, and the construction of rhyme, I had abandoned the idea. The presence of my fair friend inspired me, however, with sufficient courage again to make the attempt, and it seemed to me, if I could not attain the goal, I ought at least to enter the lists. Before departing for Paris, I also reviewed my other poetical works, the greatest part of which I had before polished; these I found had swelled to a considerable, perhaps too considerable a number.

XVII.

AFTER an uninterrupted stay of fourteen months in Alsace, I set out, in company with my fair friend, for Paris. This country, which had always proved extremely disagreeable to me, as much on account of my own character, as the manners of the people, now appeared a perfect elysium, since I inhabited it with the mistress of my affections. Uncertain, however, whether my stay would be long, I left my favorite horses in Alsace, only carrying along with me my manuscripts and a few books. After having breathed, for so long a period, the free air of the country, I found the noise and stench of this immense capital almost insupportable. The distance of my dwelling from that of my cherished friend, though agreed on between us, as well as various other circumstances, proved so extremely irksome to me, that I would instantly have quitted this modern Babylon, had I lived for myself alone. In a short time, however, I endeavored to reconcile myself to sad necessity, and to derive all the advantage from my situation that was possible. None of the literati in Paris were, however, sufficiently acquainted with the Italian language to afford me any assistance with respect to style or versification. As to what related to the dramatic art in general, in which the French exclusively arrogate to themselves the first rank, as the principles on which their tragedies are composed were dissimilar from mine, I must have possessed a great deal of apathy to listen to their magisterial dogmas, which are in a great measure just, but which are never executed by those who promulgate them. As I was not of a disputatious or wrangling turn of mind, I listened

to every one, without, however, acquiescing in what was said, by which means I acquired the sublime art of being silent. This six months' stay at Paris was of great use to me, at least in point of health.

About the middle of June we returned to our country residence in Alsace. I had already versified the elder Brutus, and by a laughable accident had been forced to resketch Sophonisba. When at Paris, I wished to read this tragedy to a French gentleman with whom I had been acquainted at Turin, and whom I regarded as an enlightened dramatic critic. It was to him I had submitted my Filippo in French prose, when he induced me to transpose the scene of the council from the fourth act, where it did not aid the progress of the action, to the third, where it now stands. In reading my Sophonisba to such a competent judge, I endeavored to ascertain by his countenance, rather than by his words, the opinion he had formed of this piece. He listened to it without knitting his brows; but I, who had read it before, was seized as I reached the middle of the second act with a depression of spirits, which augmented so much that I could not finish the third. Impelled by an irresistible impulse, I took hold of the manuscript, and threw it into the fire before which we were seated. It seemed to me as if this fire had been purposely lighted to induce me to execute so severe and prompt an act of justice. My companion, astonished at such a strange and unexpected occurrence, for I had not uttered a syllable which could lead him to suspect my design, endeavored to save my tragedy from the flames, but grasping the tongs in my blind rage I pushed poor Sophonisba between the two or three fagots of wood which burnt in the grate, so that it was impossible to rescue it. I quitted not my instru-

ment till I was satisfied the whole was consumed. This paroxysm of frenzy was similar to that I experienced when I assaulted my poor Elias at Madrid. I blushed not, however, so much on the present occasion, and on the whole it was followed with rather beneficial consequences. It confirmed the opinion I had before entertained respecting the subject of this tragedy: it is truly shocking, exhibiting at once a false tragic character, which it is impossible to preserve throughout. I resolved to think of it no more; but the resolutions of a poet are like maternal anger. A few months afterwards, the original sketch of the unfortunate Sophonisba, thus sacrificed, fell into my hands. I read it over, and found something to commend: hence I was induced once more to attempt its versification, to abridge it, and endeavor by the excellence of the style to supply, or at least conceal, the inherent faults of the subject. Though I was then as now fully persuaded that it could never be rendered a tragedy of the first order, I had not the courage to relinquish it, because it was the only subject which could enable me to portray the grand and heroic sentiments of the Romans and Carthaginians. I am even proud of some scenes in this feeble tragedy.

At this period it appeared to me that a complete edition of my tragedies was much wanted, and I determined to avail myself of my present residence in Paris to commence this undertaking, resolved to spare neither expense nor fatigue to render it perfect, and worthy of public patronage.

In May, 1787, the first volume of my tragedies was put to press: this was only intended to serve as a kind of mutual pledge, since I was to return to Alsace in June, where it was my intention to remain till the following

winter; consequently the impression could not be got forward, though arrangements had been made for transmitting the proofs weekly to me for correction, Thus I pledged myself to revisit in the winter this country, to which I had always the greatest repugnance. I took care that love and glory should impel me forward. I left with Didot the manuscripts of the preliminary dissertations, and of the three first tragedies, which I absurdly conceived could receive no farther polish or improvement; but no sooner had some of the sheets been printed, than I perceived how grossly I had deceived myself.

My love of tranquillity, the delightful situation of my country-house, the society of my cherished friend, with whom I now constantly resided, my books, my favorite horses, — all these objects made me eagerly hasten back to Alsace. The pleasure I hoped to derive from this excursion was also greatly heightened by my friend Caluso having promised to spend the summer with us. He was the best and most worthy man I ever knew, and the only friend who remained to me since the death of Gandellini. Some weeks after our arrival in Alsace, my fair friend and I set out express for Geneva to meet the good Abbé, intending to return with him by the way of Switzerland to our country-house near Colmar, where I found united everything which could render existence desirable.

The want of an enlightened friend, for the last two years, who could converse in Italian and on Italian literature, had proved extremely injurious to me, especially in regard to the art of versification. It is certain that if Voltaire and Rousseau, who have acquired so much renown in France, had wandered during the greatest part of their lives in countries where dif-

ferent languages were spoken, and where they could find no one to converse with in their own, they would not have had the perseverance and steadiness to write from the mere love of literature, or for their own satisfaction, as I have done, and still continue to do, though compelled to associate with barbarians.

We can justly apply to the rest of Europe, and even to a great part of Italy itself, this denomination respecting everything which relates to Italian literature. If we write pure Italian, and attempt to compose verses in imitation of the style of Petrarch and Dante, we may well inquire if there is one man in Italy who could understand and relish these divine authors. To say one in a thousand would be too many. Being, however, an enthusiastic admirer of the sublime and beautiful, which I take every opportunity to proclaim, I would rather compose in a language which may be almost termed dead, and for a people nearly extinct. I would rather, I affirm, be unknown to my contemporaries than write in the harsh and unharmonious French and English, though their canons and their armies have rendered these languages fashionable. I would rather be the author of ten good Italian verses, even with the certainty of seeing them despised and neglected for the moment, than write in either English, French, or any similar jargon, the merit of which consists solely in the powers of the speaker, though assured that my productions would be everywhere read, admired, and applauded. There is a great difference to our own ears in sounding a fine-toned lyre, even when no one is present to listen, and blowing a detestable French horn, however much an ignorant audience might applaud the performance.

I frequently vented my indignation in a similar

strain to the worthy Abbé, which never failed to tranquillize my mind. The happiness, which was to me equally new as delightful, of passing my days with two worthy and dearly cherished beings, did not long continue. An accident happened to my friend, which soon disturbed our repose. One day, when riding together, he fell from his horse, and dislocated his wrist. At first I believed he had fractured his arm, or even sustained a greater injury, which agitated me very much; but very soon I had not to lament for my friend alone. In two days I was myself attacked with a violent and obstinate dysentery, the progress of which was so rapid that in fifteen days I was reduced to the last extremity. It was not accompanied with fever, but I was so much exhausted, and my natural heat so greatly diminished, that the fomentations of aromatized wine, which were applied to my stomach and bowels, in order to impart some degree of activity to those weakened organs, though so extremely hot as to take off my skin, as well as that from the hands of the domestics, nevertheless conveyed to me such a sensation of cold as proved extremely disagreeable. My vitality seemed completely extinguished, except in my head, which, though weak, was perfectly clear. At the end of fifteen days my malady began to abate, and gradually diminished till the thirtieth. In six weeks I was convalescent, but reduced to a perfect skeleton, and so extremely feeble, that during fourteen weeks I was obliged to be lifted into another bed while my own was adjusted. I truly despaired of my recovery: I shuddered at the idea of death: I could not think with calmness on leaving my two worthy friends, and relinquishing that fame, which for ten years I had toiled to obtain, and the dawn of which I had just begun to

perceive. I was fully conscious that none of my works were so perfect as I could have rendered them had more time been allowed me. On the other hand, I consoled myself with the reflection that since I must leave this world I should die without having become a slave, and that two persons who were the most dear to me, and whose esteem and friendship I flattered myself I had merited, would watch over my last moments, and, in short, that I should quit life without having experienced any of those moral and physical evils which accompany old age.

Fate, however, spared my life, and my tragedies received the last polish from my own hands. I shall be sufficiently compensated for all my labor if they preserve my name from being consigned to oblivion.

My health, as I have already said, became re-established, but my head continued so weak that I was unable to bestow on the proofs of the three first tragedies, which passed successively through my hands in the space of four months, the tenth part of those corrections which I might otherwise have made in them. This was the reason why two years afterwards, when the edition was completed, I reprinted them. My only object in taking such a step was a desire to do justice to the dramatic art, and perhaps to secure my own reputation. There are certainly very few individuals who could understand or attend to the various alterations I made in them with respect to style; changes which, taken singly, appear extremely trifling, but which, in the aggregate, are more important than is generally conceived.

XVIII.

MY health was somewhat re-established, when the worthy Abbé, who was perfectly recovered from his accident, and who had some literary occupations at Turin, where he was secretary to the Academy of Sciences, proposed to take a journey to Strasburg, before departing for Italy. Though still feeble, I was anxious to accompany him, in order to prolong the satisfaction I felt in his society; and we accordingly set out, accompanied by my fair friend, on this excursion, in the month of October. We proceeded to view the magnificent printing-press belonging to M. de Beaumarchais at Kehl, and Baskerville's types, which were to be employed in printing a complete edition of Voltaire's works. The beauty of these characters, the accuracy of the workmen, the intimacy which had subsisted between me and M. de Beaumarchais at Paris, all rendered me anxious to engage him to print the whole of my works, except my dramatic productions, and which would have experienced many obstacles from the censors then existing in France, whose cavilling and delays were extremely vexatious. I always felt the greatest reluctance in submitting to the revision which preceded the printing. I neither desire nor expect to be suffered to print everything, but I have in this respect adopted the laws of England, which I will hold by. I never composed any work which I could not have published with the greatest freedom in that country, without any blame being attached either to the author or printer. Complete freedom of opinion, a profound respect for the laws, and an anxious wish not to injure any individual: such have always been the rules I prescribed to myself.

After having obtained from Beaumarchais permission to employ his printing-press, I took advantage of my present excursion to leave the manuscript of my five Odes on American Independence, which, being a small work, I intended should serve as a specimen. The impression was so beautiful and so accurate that during the two succeeding years I printed at this press all my other works which I have published or intend to publish.

From Strasburg we returned to Colmar, and a few days afterwards, towards the end of October, my worthy friend departed for Turin, leaving me full of regret for his absence, and anxious again to enjoy his society. We remained the whole of November, and part of December, in the country. During this period my strength became gradually recruited, and I employed myself in versifying the second Brutus, which I could correct and polish at leisure, as it was intended to be the last piece in the collection.

I arrived in Paris, where I had agreed to take up my residence. Here I was so fortunate as to find a very pleasant and quiet residence in the Faubourg Saint Germain, at the termination of Mont Parnasse. The situation was beautiful, the view picturesque, and the air excellent. We here enjoyed all the solitude of the country. It seemed to me as if I were once more in Rome, at the Baths of Diocletian. I had presented my fair friend with the half of my horses, not only because she was in want of them, but in order to free myself from the expense and trouble they occasioned me; the other half I transported, not without considerable difficulty, to Paris. Once settled, I busied myself in the fatiguing and disagreeable business of correcting the press, which occupied me during three

whole years. In February, 1788, my friend received information from Rome of the death of her husband, where he had resided for two years. Although an illness under which he had labored for several months might have prepared her for this event; though she was left a widow, and absolute mistress of herself; though she had lost in him only a tyrant, and not a friend, I was an eyewitness to the surprise and grief which she testified on this occasion, and which was neither feigned nor exaggerated; never could dissimulation find entrance into a heart so noble and pure as hers. Unquestionably, her husband, notwithstanding the great disparity of their years, might have found in her a valuable companion, and if not a woman who loved him, at least a true friend, had he not disgusted and persecuted her by his harsh and brutal manners. I must here bear testimony to the truth.

It was at this period that the panegyric I had written in 1787 fell in my way. I found in it much to correct, which I immediately set about, being anxious that it should proceed from the press of Didot, as I wished all my works to be well printed. I added to it an ode on the destruction of the Bastile, which I had composed, having been an eyewitness of the commencement of the troubles in Paris; and I terminated this volume by a little apologue applicable to existing circumstances.

XIX.

DURING the month of April, 1789, I lived in perpetual disquiet; I dreaded every moment lest the public tumults, which occurred at Paris since the convocation of the states-general, might prevent me from completing the impression of my works, and that,

after all my labor, toil, and expense, I should suffer shipwreck when almost in sight of a haven to shelter my weather-beaten bark. I hurried on the execution of the work as much as possible, but Didot's workmen did not co-operate with my exertions: they were so completely absorbed in politics, that they spent whole days in reading newspapers, instead of proceeding with the printing of my book. I thought they were all mad: my joy, therefore, may be readily conceived, when the day at length arrived on which my tragedies were packed up, and forwarded to Italy and other countries. My satisfaction, however, was not of long duration: things proceeded from bad to worse: the public safety and tranquillity diminished every day, while in a proportionate degree uncertainty, and the most ominous presages of the future, became augmented. When individuals, like my fair friend and I, are surrounded by monkeys, and have to do with them, it is impossible to remain at ease, since it cannot be affirmed that the desire of doing mischief may not seize them.

During one year I saw and witnessed in silence the progress of the deplorable effects resulting from the learned ignorance of this nation, which can copiously prattle on every subject, but which will never ultimately succeed in anything, because it understands not the practical mode of managing mankind, as our political prophet Machiavel long ago remarked. My heart was torn asunder on beholding the holy and sublime cause of liberty betrayed by self-called philosophers, — so much did I revolt at witnessing their ignorance, their folly, and their crimes; at beholding the military power, and the insolence and licentiousness of the civilians stupidly made the basis of what they termed political lib-

erty, that I henceforth desired nothing more ardently than to leave a country which, like a lunatic hospital, contained only fools or incurables. I should have then left it without delay, if my better half had not been detained by unfortunate circumstances:

Rendered almost stupid by the continual doubts and fears which I had experienced since the impression of my tragedies, I led a life of gloomy despondency, and might rather be said to vegetate than to live. My mind had become so torpid and inactive by having so long been occupied with correcting and other concerns of the printing-press, that I was rendered almost incapable of any dignified or laudable pursuit. I daily, however, received information from all quarters, to which my dramatic works had been forwarded, that they sold well, and gave general satisfaction: but as I only received this intelligence from individuals who were my friends, or were benevolently disposed towards me, I did not place such implicit reliance on it as to abandon myself to that joy which I otherwise should have felt on the occasion. In short, I resolved equally to disregard praise and censure, unless supported by correct and impartial reasoning. But though I anxiously, and on every occasion, invited philosophic criticism, which would have proved not less beneficial to my productions than to the dramatic art in general, I never could obtain it. I regarded anything else as unworthy of notice: I knew beforehand what would be said; nevertheless, I spared neither attention nor time to render my pieces as perfect as possible. My memory may, perhaps, be more honored, since, though undeceived in regard to all my expectations, I yet persevered in endeavoring to write well, rather than to write quickly, and

because I have never yielded up my opinions but to the omnipotence of truth alone.

With regard to my different works printed at Kehl, I wished only at the time to publish that on American Independence, and on Departed Virtue, reserving the others for a less disastrous period. I was anxious that no one should accuse me, of what I certainly did not deserve, leaguings myself with villains, by promulgating similar doctrines, which, however, they neither understood, nor were capable of putting in practice. Notwithstanding this resolution, I was inclined to print them, because, as I have already stated, a favorable opportunity offered for this purpose, and because I was convinced that the posthumous works of any author are extremely different from those printed during his lifetime. No work can be pronounced finished till it has received the last corrections of the author in going through the press. This, indeed, will not render a production perfect, as may too frequently be observed, but at least it cannot be so without it.

I here terminate this biographical sketch at Paris, on the 27th of May, 1790, at the age of forty-one years and a few months. The sorrowful presentiments with which I was overwhelmed, the state of torpid inactivity into which I had fallen, as well as the consciousness, which I do not hesitate to avow, of not having altogether lived in vain, during the last fourteen years of my life, were among the principal causes which induced me to undertake it. I am determined not to read over again this trifling production till my sixtieth year, if I shall ever reach it, at which period I must certainly have terminated my literary career. Then I shall revise it with all the apathy natural to senescence, and superadd to it the details of my pur-

suits during the ten or fifteen years following. If I succeed in two or three different kinds of literary composition, in which I propose to try my last strength, I shall subjoin an account of these labors to the epoch of my riper years; while, on the contrary, should the subsequent years of my life prove altogether sterile, I shall commence, on resuming my general narrative, with the fifth period, my old age and second childhood. If I still then retain sufficient reason and judgment, it must be necessarily very brief, as being in every respect void of utility.

If, however, as is most probable, I should die in the interval, I entreat all those who may take an interest in my concerns, and into whose hands this production may fall, to make what use of it they think proper. Should they publish it in its present state, I flatter myself they will discover throughout at the same time indications of candor and of precipitation, which I trust may lead them to palliate any faults in the style. Nothing farther will be necessary to complete my biography, than for my friends to subjoin an account of the time, place, and manner of my death. With regard to the state of my mind at this juncture, they may boldly assure the reader, in my name, that I have but too feelingly experienced the vanity and deceit of this world, and that I feel no other pang in quitting it, except that which is inseparably associated with the idea of separating from my fair and inestimable friend: and as, during the remainder of my days, I value existence for her sake alone, I am neither agitated nor appalled by any other reflection than that of losing her. I ask from Heaven only one boon, — that I may be the first to quit this vale of tears. If, however, the friends into whose hands these manuscripts

may fall should think it necessary to commit them to the flames, they are at liberty to do so. I merely supplicate, should they be disposed to publish these memoirs, that however they may think proper to abridge, or alter them, with respect to style, they will neither amplify nor retrench, nor suppress any of the facts I have detailed. If, in composing this biographical sketch, my first object had not been to depict myself such as I really am, and to exhibit myself without disguise to those few who may wish to be made acquainted with my character, I should doubtless have compressed the account of these forty-one years of my life, and with a studied brevity and dissembled pride, not unworthy of Tacitus, reduced them to three or four pages at most. But I chose rather to portray the features of my character than to display my wit and genius as a writer. Whatever little ability I may possess, I have bestowed on my other productions, while in these memoirs I wished merely to lay open my heart, and, like an egotistical old man, to descant on myself, and consequently on man, such as he really is when undisguised, and without a mask.

XX.

NOTE. — My first occupation, on finally settling at Florence, was the perusal of the biographical sketch I had written at Paris thirteen years before, the style of which I now endeavored to improve and render more easy and harmonious. Being thus recalled to the contemplation of myself, I was induced to give an account of my literary productions during this intervening period, as some of them appeared to me not wholly devoid of interest. As my physical and moral faculties proportionally decline as I descend into the vale of years; as, moreover, it is

highly probable that my literary career is forever closed, this second part, which will be much shorter than the first, will also, I flatter myself, be the last. Having now nearly completed my eleventh lustrum, and no longer possessing either the mental or corporeal vigor necessary to literary composition, I could have indeed little to add to the account already given.

WHILE I led, as I have already said, an uneasy and indolent life at Paris, though I contemplated many projects, yet I found myself incapable of executing any of them. In the month of June, 1790, I undertook, for the sake of amusement, to translate some detached portions of the *Æneid*. The pieces I selected on this occasion were those from the perusal of which I had derived the highest gratification. On finding that this occupation proved to me no less useful than agreeable, I entered on the first book. What, moreover, stimulated me to this undertaking was the dread of losing the habit I had acquired of composing blank verse. As, however, I became weary of this monotonous employment, in order to diversify my pursuits, I undertook also the translation of Terence. The study of so excellent a model would, I trusted, enable me at a subsequent period to write comedies, and facilitate my acquisition of a style in this species of dramatic writing, not less original than that which I had formerly employed in the composition of tragedies. Thus I translated every other day alternately Virgil and Terence, till I quitted Paris, towards the end of April, when I had accomplished the translation of the four first books of the *Æneid*, and three of Terence's comedies, — the *Andriæn*, the *Eunuch*, and the *Self-Tormentor*. With a view to dissipate the gloomy reflections associated in my mind with passing occurrences, I directed my attention to the improvement of my memory, which attention

to the composition and printing of my works had made me wholly overlook. I read over again with enthusiasm various choice pieces of Horace, Virgil, and Juvenal, as well as Dante, Petrarch, Tasso, and Ariosto, thus storing my mind with verse. While these occupations rendered my imagination torpid, they deprived me of the faculty of executing anything which solely depended on myself. Of six melo-tragedies, which I had it in contemplation to compose, I succeeded only in perfecting Abel. Distracted by such various pursuits, my time, my youth, and the enthusiasm necessary for such undertakings, were irretrievably lost. During the last year I remained at Paris, and the two following, passed in different places, I composed nothing except a few epigrams and some sonnets, to which I was excited by my just indignation against the slave-trade, and the melancholy state of my mind. I also attempted to write a mixed drama, entitled Count Ugolino, which I wished to add to my melo-tragedies. But after having conceived it, I did not succeed in its development. During the month of October, 1790, I undertook, in company with my fair friend, a short excursion into Normandy by the way of Rouen, Caen, and Havre; this province, which I had never before seen, highly gratified and soothed my mind. These three last years, which were devoted to the printing of my works and passed in affliction, had altogether exhausted my mental and corporeal powers. Observing, during the month of April, that affairs in France became every day more embroiled, I determined, if possible, to seek a more secure asylum elsewhere. Besides, as my fair friend wished much to visit England, a country differing in so many respects from every other, I determined to embrace the opportunity of accompanying her thither, and we accordingly set out on this journey without delay.

XXI.

WE set out on this journey towards the latter end of April, 1791, and as we intended to remain for a considerable time in England, we took with us our horses, and gave up our house in Paris. We reached London in a very few days. While my fair friend was highly delighted with this country in a variety of respects, she was but little pleased with it in regard to some others. As for me, to whom the country was not new, though I still admired it on account of its government, this admiration was not so excessive as on my two former visits. The climate and mode of living were also less agreeable to me than on my third visit. The protracted pleasures of the table, and the sitting up till two or three o'clock in the morning, constituted a mode of life not less unfavorable to literary pursuits than to the enjoyment of mental and bodily vigor.

I soon became attacked with an irregular gout, which, in this cursed island, is absolutely indigenous; and as soon as the charm of novelty was over with my friend, we longed to quit England. It was in the month of June, this year, that Louis XVI., on attempting to leave his kingdom, was forced back from Varennes, and more closely guarded than ever. In consequence of this event, the political horizon became daily more gloomy, and we felt ourselves extremely embarrassed with regard to our pecuniary concerns. Each of us had three fourths of our property in France, where specie had wholly disappeared, and paper money had been issued to a vast amount to supply its place. This daily fell in value, and we soon found our property in consequence of this rapid depreciation reduced to almost

nothing. Gloomy, and forced by imperious necessity, we determined to submit to it, and, dismal as was the prospect before our eyes, it behooved us to return to France as the only country in which we could subsist on our depreciated paper. During the month of August, before quitting England, we visited Bath, Bristol, and Oxford. We then returned to London, whence we set out for Dover, and embarked a few days afterwards for France.

While I remained at this place a romantic adventure occurred to me, which I shall here briefly relate. During my third journey to England, in 1783 and 1784, I neither learned nor sought to obtain any tidings respecting the lady on whose account I had exposed myself to so many risks. I only knew from public report that she had quitted London, that her husband died shortly after obtaining the divorce, and that she had espoused an unknown and obscure individual. During the four months which I spent in England, I never heard so much as her name pronounced, and knew not even if she still existed. When ready to embark, I wished to go on board the packet-boat about a quarter of an hour before my fair friend, in order to see if everything was in readiness. When on the point of entering it, casting my eyes towards the beach, where a great concourse of people had assembled, the first object I beheld was the woman of whom I had once been so deeply enamored. She appeared scarcely less lovely than what she had been twenty years before. At first sight I thought I recognized her, but on looking more steadfastly, she cast on me a gracious smile, which convinced me I was not mistaken. The emotions which were excited in my mind on again beholding her, I find myself utterly incompetent to describe. I had sufficient

resolution, however, to avoid speaking to her, and, jumping immediately into the packet-boat, did not again go ashore. Within a quarter of an hour my fair friend came on board, and the anchor was immediately weighed. She informed me that some persons, in accompanying her aboard the packet, had not only pointed out the lady, but given her name, and some anecdotes of her past and present modes of life. I related to my friend, between whom and myself no dissimulation was ever practised, the manner in which I had recognized her. On landing at Calais, finding myself still affected by the unexpected sight of a woman on whose account I had been led to commit so many acts of extravagance, I thought it incumbent on me to address her by letter, which I sent under cover to a banker at Dover, requesting him to deliver it into her own hands, and to forward her answer to me at Brussels, where I should arrive in a few days. I am now truly grieved that I did not keep a copy of this letter, which must doubtless have been filled with the most impassioned sentiments. These were not dictated by any latent love on my part, but merely inspired by a feeling of sorrow and regret, on account of her unsettled and wandering life, so little suitable to her former rank and condition in society.

On our landing at Calais, we resolved, previous to returning to our prison in France, to make a tour through the United Provinces, as my friend wished to avail herself of an opportunity which might never again return, of viewing a country which exhibits so conspicuous an example of the efforts of human industry.

We travelled along the coast as far as Bruges and Ostend, and from thence proceeded by the way of Antwerp and Rotterdam to Amsterdam, the Hague, and

North Holland. About the end of September we again returned to Brussels, in which resided the mother and sisters of my amiable friend. After spending several weeks in this city, we again set out for France, in which cruel circumstances compelled us to take up our abode.

XXII:

Two months were nearly spent before we could find out a commodious house, and furnish it suitably to our inclinations. Though we flattered ourselves that every succeeding day would bring tranquillity and peace, yet we more frequently despaired of such a desirable change. During this alternate fluctuation between hope and fear, my friend and I, like every one who resided in Paris, led a very solitary life. The books left behind at Rome in 1783 had been forwarded, according to my instructions, nearly two years ago: these, with others I had purchased during my residence at Paris, London, and Holland, amounted to a very considerable collection. Thus, I possessed all that was essential to me in my contracted literary sphere. In the enjoyment of my books, and the society of my inestimable friend, I experienced every domestic consolation. My happiness suffered no alloy, excepting from a dread that this state of peace and tranquillity would not be permanent. This idea finally took such possession of my mind as to render me incapable of any serious study. By way of occupying myself, however, with something, I prosecuted my translation of Virgil and Terence. Neither during my last nor former stay at Paris, did I ever wish to associate with, or to be personally introduced to any of the demagogues of the day, for whom I felt the most

invincible antipathy and the most profound contempt. At the moment I am writing, I can boast that during the fourteen years the tragic farce lasted, I was uncontaminated in thought, word, or deed, never having seen or held any correspondence with the despots who governed, or with the slaves who trammelled themselves to their cars. In the month of March, this year, I received letters from my mother: they were the last she ever wrote me, and expressed her maternal fears for my safety, in a country, where, she said, anarchy prevailed, where the exercise of the Catholic religion was no longer permitted by law, and in which new troubles and disorders might be expected to arise. Her predictions were, alas! too soon verified; but when I pursued my journey to Italy, this worthy and excellent woman was no more. She quitted this life on the 23d of April, 1792, at the age of seventy years. The war between France and the Emperor of Germany, which proved so disastrous in the sequel, had now been declared. In the month of June attempts were made not only to annihilate royalty itself, but even the very name of king. The conspiracy having failed to accomplish its object on the 20th of June, things continued nearly on the same footing till the ever-memorable 10th of August, when it again burst forth. It will not be here improper to transcribe the details which I transmitted of this affair in a letter to the Abbé Caluso, written on the 14th of the same month.

“PARIS, August 14, 1792.

“MY DEAR FRIEND, — The conspiracy, which had been hatching for so long a period, at length burst forth. During the night of the 9th or 10th instant, the populace of the Faubourg Saint-Antoine and the Faubourg Saint-Marceau began to assemble, and take up arms; not only all the inhabitants of the city, but

even the national guards quickly followed their example, and appeared drawn up in order of battle, with colors flying, and supported by artillery. This vast assemblage arrived between four and five o'clock in the morning at the Palace of the Tuileries, which was defended only by six or seven hundred Swiss, and an equal number of national guards; on the majority of the latter, however, little reliance could be placed. In the castle were about three hundred gentlemen devoted to the king. Small as this force was, the palace might have been easily defended, had the individuals composing it made proper dispositions, and instead of waiting for the approach of the assailants, immediately advanced to attack them. I ought to add that the cannoneers themselves, who were intermixed with the Swiss and national guards, were suspected of disloyalty, the truth of which ulterior events but too fully confirmed. Under a different monarch individuals might surely have been found who would have generously sacrificed themselves to the support of his cause, and thus afforded a memorable example to posterity; but under another monarch anarchy and popular tumult would have been quickly stifled in the birth. Louis XVI. was certainly not deficient in personal courage, but it much more resembled the calm fortitude of a martyr than the intrepidity of a prince resolved to perish rather than subject himself to degradation. While momentarily expecting an attack, a message was sent him by the treacherous Assembly, and another by the still more treacherous municipality. They each observed, that as it was impossible to guarantee the safety of his royal person in the present agitated state of the public mind, they therefore invited him, and the rest of the royal family, to take shelter in the bosom of the Assembly, while the communication remained free by the gardens of the Tuileries. His majesty, who at first appeared to acquiesce in the determination of his attendants to defend him, on receiving this message suddenly changed his mind, and took refuge with his family and a few courtiers in the Assembly. In the mean time the faithful Swiss, the cowardly and treacherous guards, with his majesty's brave

attendants, who had resolved to die in his defence, were shut up as in a cage. As soon as the king departed, under a strong escort of national guards, every passage leading from the palace to the gardens was secured and barricaded. It is not easy to ascertain whether the populace or the Swiss fired first: it seems, however, highly probable that the latter would not be the first to commit this act of aggression, as, besides being very disadvantageously situated, their number was comparatively small with that of their enemies: but on whichever side the firing commenced, it is certain that the discharges from the cannon, which the Swiss had pointed towards the invested gate, made terrible havoc among the assailants, and obliged them to seek their safety in flight. It appears that if the Swiss and the three hundred gentlemen had immediately sallied out in pursuit of them, they must either have finally overcome their enemies, or fallen gloriously in the attempt; but the want of a leader and proper dispositions ruined everything. The fugitives met, as they were flying in disorder and dismay, a body of *gendarmerie*, which on the present occasion was composed of old French guards, domestics, liverymen out of employment, and other rabble. As all these were avowedly hostile to the royal cause, they encouraged the people, and led them back to the attack. In the mean time the national guards, who were shut up with the Swiss, seeing the attack about to be renewed with an additional force, turned against them. Thus were the unfortunate Swiss, in consequence of being placed between two fires, quickly put to the rout, and, flying in all directions, were most of them inhumanly butchered. The carnage was dreadful, and continued during that and the following day. As soon as any of them were discovered, whether in the streets, or wherever concealed, they were immediately dragged forth, and immolated by the infuriated rabble. Some of the gentlemen, who remained in the palace, fought and died with the Swiss in the courts below, while others, having opened for themselves a passage into the gardens, either succeeded in saving themselves or met death in their flight. The palace, however, was

not pillaged, though everything it contained was broken or destroyed. The people slew with their own hands all whom they caught in the act of pilfering, thus wishing by a show of justice to cover their own enormities. Throughout the whole affair, robbery appeared to be regarded as one of the seven sins not sanctioned by public opinion, while all the others merely changed their appellations, and served as a basis for the existing system. The reason of this tumult is self-evident. The seditious part of the Assembly, finding they could not secure a majority to vote for the dethronement of the king, stirred up the multitude to compass at once the downfall of Louis, and the destruction of the monarchy. During the remainder of this eventful day his majesty remained in the Assembly, and at night three cells in the adjoining convent of the Feuillans were appropriated for the accommodation of himself and his family. They were suffered to remain without change of apparel: a single domestic was only allowed to every two of the royal family, and their table was supplied from a common tavern. The few gentlemen who had attended their monarch during the first and second day were dismissed from his presence by order of the Assembly; in short, such was the treatment they received, that death must have appeared to them a less evil than those they were doomed to suffer. The new constitution is annihilated: all power, at present, virtually resides in the Assembly: these are said to be only provisional measures, which I believe really to be the case, though I am of opinion that its sway will terminate in a very different manner from what is generally supposed. A convention is to be convoked on the 20th of September."

After the occurrence of this event, my mind became wholly occupied with the idea of rescuing my fair friend from the imminent dangers that threatened us on every side. I lost not a moment in taking the proper measures to secure our flight, and on the 12th every preparation had been made for our departure. One difficulty,

however, still remained to be overcome, that of obtaining our passports. During two or three days I exerted every effort, and at length, on the 15th, we obtained them as foreigners, I from the Venetian envoy, and my friend from the Danish ambassador, the only ministers who had not yet quitted the court of Louis XVI., now stripped of almost every vestige of royalty. But we still found it more difficult to procure passports from our section of Mont Blanc. It was necessary, however, that individuals of every rank, whether in the situation of masters or servants, should possess one, accurately describing their age, stature, sex, the color of their hair, eyes, etc. Furnished with these badges of slavery, we fixed on Monday, the 20th of August, for our departure. A dread, however, lest some obstacles should occur to prevent us putting our design into execution, caused us to set off on the 18th, two days sooner than we had originally intended. We had scarcely reached the Barrière Blanche, that lay directly in our road to Calais, to which place we intended to proceed, in order to escape as quickly as possible from this wretched country, than we discovered three or four national guards, with an officer. After examining our passports they seemed disposed to open the gates of our immense prison, when about thirty individuals of the lowest description sallied out of a wretched inn near the barrier. They were half naked, furious, and in a state of intoxication. As soon as they beheld our two carriages, loaded with portmanteaus and baggage of every kind, with two female attendants, besides three male domestics, they began to vociferate that if all the rich were thus allowed to leave Paris and carry off their wealth, they would be reduced to utter beggary and wretchedness. On this, an altercation took

place between the national guards and these miserable wretches. While the former attempted to open for us a passage, the latter endeavored forcibly to detain us. Upon this, I immediately sprang out of my carriage into the midst of this rabble, and, fortified by my seven passports, began to altercate, vociferate, and make a noise like themselves, knowing by experience that this was the only means to succeed with Frenchmen. They were perused one after another by those among them who could read. Furious, and foaming with rage, I heeded not the danger which menaced us at this instant. I tore my passport three times from their hands, exclaiming aloud, "Observe! listen! my name is Alfieri: I am an Italian by birth, and not a Frenchman. View me attentively, and consider whether I am not the identical individual whom the passports describe as tall, meagre, pale, and red-haired. My passport is genuine: I have obtained it from those who have power to grant it. I wish to pass, and by heavens I will pass." During the continuance of this tumult, which lasted for about half an hour, I kept a good countenance, to which circumstance, I am inclined to think, we in a great measure owed our safety. In the mean time a mob had collected around us, while some of the rabble vociferated, "Let us set fire to their carriages"; others cried out, "Let us stone them"; but the majority insisted that as we were rich, noble, and meant to emigrate, we should instantly be conducted to the Hôtel de Ville, in order to be tried. In short, the occasional interposition of the four national guards in our favor, the incessant noise I made with my stentorian voice, the open display of our passports, and, above all, the continuance of the altercation for at least half an hour, at length so exhausted these

tiger-monkeys that their opposition to our departure began to abate. At this moment, on a signal being given by the guards, I sprang into the carriage, where I had left my fair friend, whose situation may readily be conceived: the postilions mounted their horses, and on the barrier being thrown open, drove off at full gallop, amidst the groans, hisses, insults, and curses of this infuriated rabble. It was extremely fortunate that the advice of those who wished to carry us back to the Hôtel de Ville did not prevail; for as our carriages were loaded with baggage, and as we travelled with a considerable retinue, we certainly ran the greatest risk of being taken for emigrants. Had we been once carried before the municipality, instead of being allowed to depart, we should most probably have been sent to prison, and closed our existence, like many others who were massacred, on the 2d of September, fifteen days after this occurrence.

Having effected our escape from this earthly hell, we travelled with all possible speed, and reached Calais in two days and a half, during which we were forced to produce our passports not less than forty times. I afterwards discovered that we were the only foreigners who had effected their escape out of the kingdom after the catastrophe of the 10th of August. In every municipality where it was necessary to present our passports, all those who cast their eyes over them evinced terror and dismay. They bore the name of the king, which had been afterwards erased. They were ignorant of the events which had taken place, and felt appalled.

Such were the auspices under which we escaped out of France, firmly resolved nevermore to enter it. After arriving at Calais, we experienced no further

obstruction in pursuing our journey by Gravelines to the frontiers of Flanders. We had taken the road to Calais, for as peace still continued with England, it was less difficult to proceed in this direction than through Flanders, where war had already commenced. As soon as we reached Brussels, my fair friend determined, in order that she might recruit her exhausted spirits, to remain a month in the country with her sister and worthy brother-in-law. While there, we received letters from the domestics whom we had left behind at Paris. They informed us that on Monday, the 20th of August, the day fixed on for our departure, which fortunately I had anticipated, the section, from which we had obtained our passports, had sent to arrest my amiable friend and carry her to prison. It is scarcely possible to conceive an instance of more gross stupidity and folly; but her crimes were well known: she was rich, noble, and of an irreproachable character. As for me, who have uniformly considered myself of inferior estimation, I was not deemed worthy of such an honor. Finding they could not discover us, they immediately confiscated our horses, furniture, books, and all that we possessed, and sequestered our revenues, declaring us emigrants. We afterwards learned the dreadful catastrophe and horrors of the 2d of September, and returned thanks to Heaven for having rescued us from them.

When we understood that the political horizon in France became every day more dark and gloomy, that the *soi-disant* republic was solely maintained through the influence of terror and the shedding of blood, we were thankful that the whole of our property had not been involved in the general wreck.

On the 1st of October we set out for Italy, and in

our progress passed through Aix-la-Chapelle, Frankfort, Augsburg, and Innspruck. We crossed the Alps in high spirits, animated with the idea of once more finding ourselves in our own happy country. The pleasure of having escaped from a horde of barbarians, of treading in company with my amiable friend the same road which I had so frequently travelled to see her, the gratification of enjoying her society without restraint, and the contemplation of resuming my cherished studies, so tranquillized my spirits that, feeling myself again inspired with poetic fervor, I composed a great number of verses. At length, on the 3d of November, we arrived at Florence, where we determined to take up our residence. There the charms of the country and of the language compensated me for all the losses I had sustained in France.

XXIII.

WE spent nearly a whole year at Florence, before we could find a house perfectly suited to our taste. In the mean time the exquisite pleasure I derived from hearing my vernacular tongue daily spoken, from meeting with individuals who sometimes entered into conversation respecting my tragedies, the satisfaction of seeing them frequently, though badly represented, all conspired to revive in me that love of literature which had almost become extinct.

My first production, after three years of inaction, was an Apology for Louis XVI., which I wrote in the month of December. As soon as this was completed, I resumed my translations of Terence and the *Æneid*; and during the subsequent year, 1793, concluded the

rough copy of them. I next began to recopy my Sallust, the only work to which I had devoted any part of my time in my journeys to England, during which, moreover, I read oftener than once the whole works of Cicero. I not only corrected this translation, but gave to it, as I conceived, a higher polish. I composed also a short historical and satirical view of the French Revolution, which I prefixed by way of introduction to a collection of sonnets, epigrams, and other poetical pieces, written on these mournful as well as ridiculous events. This work I entitled the *Anti-Gallican*.

Though both my amiable friend and I had lost a great part of our property, we still had sufficient left to live comfortably. My attachment for her augmented with our misfortunes, and in proportion as she was persecuted by fortune, the more dear did she become to me. Thus my melancholy was dissipated, my spirits became tranquillized, and the love of letters again took possession of my mind. I devoted myself again to study, but soon found that I was in want of books. I only possessed a hundred and fifty volumes of the small editions of the classics: the others had been lost, and I never made any serious effort to recover them, except once through the medium of a friend, the Italian envoy at Paris. This request was expressed in an epigram, which I transmitted to him in 1795. Both this epigram and the answer may be found in a long note subjoined to the second prose piece in the *Anti-Gallican*. After finishing *Abel*, I had conceived the plan of five other melodramas, but soon found it necessary to abandon them. My past and present disappointments, the dissipation of the best part of my youth in superintending for five years the impression of my vari-

ous works, together with the misfortunes to which I had been subjected during that period, all tended to extinguish in my mind that vigor and energy so necessary to insure success in productions of this kind. As soon as I perceived that it behoved me to abandon this long-cherished idea, I directed my attention to the composition of satires, of which I had already written one that might serve as an introduction to others. Having, moreover, acquired some experience in this species of composition, while employed in finishing the different pieces contained in the *Anti-Gallican*, I flattered myself that success was not beyond my reach. Thus stimulated by hope, I completed the second, and part of the third. As my spirits were, however, far from being tranquil, and as besides I was very uncomfortably situated, and in want of books, resolution to prosecute the undertaking soon abandoned me.

From the combined influence of these and other causes, I became seized with the whim of playing a part in one of my own tragedies. Among my juvenile acquaintances at Florence, I had discovered a few, besides a lady, who appeared not only to possess taste, but even some talents for this art. After rehearsing *Saul*, we acted it during the spring of 1793, in a private house, before a select audience, and with much success. Towards the end of this year we found out near the end of the bridge of Santa Trinità a house, which, though small, was admirably adapted for our accommodation, situated on the Arno, and facing the south. We took possession of it in November, since which I have uniformly occupied it. I shall here probably close my earthly career, should fate cease to persecute me. The salubrity of the air, and the charming prospect I enjoy, besides other conveniences attached

to this house, have in a great measure restored my intellectual faculties, and powers of conception, excepting for melo-tragedies, in which I find it still impossible to succeed. By devoting so much of my time to the pleasure of acting a part in my own tragedies, I spent nearly three months in the spring of 1794. Saul was first represented at my house, and afterwards Brutus the Elder, in each of which I acted the principal character. It was affirmed by those who were competent judges, and I had some reason to believe their opinion correct, that I had made considerable progress in this difficult art. Had I been younger, and less harassed with care, I have reason to think I should have succeeded completely. Every time I performed my powers augmented; I conceived my part better, acquired a greater command of voice, and a more perfect cadence; besides which, I became progressively more capable of assuming those attitudes necessary to impart animation to the expressions, and to give effect to the character. The company also became more perfect in performing their respective parts under my guidance. I then clearly perceived, that had I possessed riches, opportunity, and health, I might, in the course of two or three years, have succeeded in forming a company of tragic actors, if not excellent, at least superior to those who then arrogated to themselves that character in Italy.

My entering so much into this amusement contributed not only to retard my literary pursuits this year, but also during the following, 1795, in which I appeared in the capacity of a player for the last time. I successively performed the parts of Carlos and of Filippo, in the two tragedies so named, and on another occasion that of Saul, which was my favorite character. This

last piece was also acted by a private company at Pisa, during the Festival of the Illumination, to which I was invited. I had the childish vanity to accept of this invitation, and to appear once more in the character of Saul, after which I took a final leave of the stage.

During the two years I resided in Tuscany I purchased various books, and among others the Italian authors I had formerly possessed. To these I added not only the Latin classics, but also the best Græco-Latin editions of all the Greek classics, as much from a desire of having them in my possession, as of, at least, rendering myself acquainted with their names.

XXIV.

BETTER late than never.

When I reflected at forty-six years of age, after having cultivated for nearly half that period, whether successfully or not, an acquaintance with dramatic and lyric poetry, that I had neither read the Greek tragedies, nor Homer, nor Pindar, I felt truly ashamed, and was stimulated by a laudable desire to learn something from these fathers of the art. I the more readily yielded to this impulse, as for several years, my peregrinations, my horses, my disappointments, and an unremitting attention to the correction of my works, had so deadened my mind, that I could not aspire to be a man of erudition, — a character, to obtain which nothing is more necessary than a retentive memory and much reading. Unfortunately, my memory, which had been good, was greatly impaired. In order, however, to escape from a life of indolence, and to conquer my predilection for the life of a buffoon, as well as to acquire information, I

was induced to enter on this undertaking. With this view I read successively Homer, Hesiod, Aristophanes, Anacreon, and the Greek tragedies, all of which I studied attentively in the Latin translations. As for Pindar, I soon found it was labor lost. His lyric flights, literally translated, appeared in my eyes truly pitiful; and, not finding myself competent to understand them in the original, I threw them aside. I spent nearly one year and a half in this species of study, which proved equally repugnant to my disposition as unproductive of benefit. I wrote, however, in the interval, some poetical scraps; and during 1796 extended my satires to seven. This year proved extremely disastrous to Italy, by the invasions of the French, an event which completely overpowered my spirits. I contemplated in imagination misery and slavery hovering over my head. The melancholy posture of affairs in Piedmont made me tremble, lest I should be deprived of the last means of subsistence. Determined never to flatter, nor become a slave, I prepared my mind to support every other reverse of fortune with the fortitude of a philosopher. I plunged deeper than ever into study, which I considered as the only means calculated to abstract my mind from the evils which surrounded me on every side.

XXV.

IN 1778, while my highly valued friend Caluso was at Florence, I entreated him, as much through a love of indolence, as from curiosity, that he would write on a loose sheet of paper the Greek alphabet, both in great and small characters; and in this way I learned, though imperfectly, to know the letters, and even to name them.

This circumstance had escaped my memory, till I began to peruse the Latin translations, when, discovering this alphabet among my papers, I endeavored to recognize and pronounce the letters. My intention was merely to acquire the sound of the compound or extraordinary terms which in the translation resembled not those in the text, and which on that account induced me to cast my eyes on it. In this way I was led to view the characters occasionally, as the fox in the fable is said to have viewed the grapes which were beyond his reach. What also greatly contributed to retard my progress in this study was, that I could not look for any length of time on either the great or small characters, without my sight being dazzled by it. I could never make out more than one word at a time, and even that, however short, I was obliged to spell, but could neither read nor pronounce, much less retain in my mind the sound of a single verse.

My aversion to grammar, my repugnance and incapacity for servile application of any kind, my inaptitude to acquire languages,* my age, my ignorance of all grammatical rules, even in Italian, of which I knew only sufficient to avoid gross blunders, without, however, understanding its principles, — such were the physical and moral obstacles which I had to encounter, and which I essayed to overcome by my own powers. I did not communicate my intention to any one, not even to my fair friend, and that is saying everything. After having spent two years, as it were, on the confines of Greece, without being able to penetrate further than with my eyes, I became at length determined to surmount every difficulty by my own exertions.

* I had twice attempted, though without success, to acquire a knowledge of the English.

I purchased a great number of Græco-Latin, and afterwards Greek grammars. I incessantly repeated the verb *τύπτω*, the circumflex verbs, and the verbs in *μι*. Observing me always muttering something between my teeth, this inestimable friend was anxious to know what I was about, and by her frequent inquiries at length drew from me the secret. Persevering with indefatigable patience, I succeeded towards the end of 1797 in rendering myself capable of reading a page of Greek either in prose or verse, whether in large or small characters, without my eyes suffering by it. I at last even comprehended the text, by comparing it with the Latin column on the opposite side; that is to say, when I had either forgotten, or was unacquainted with any of the Greek words, I hastily glanced my eye over the corresponding Latin. After much difficulty, I acquired the capability of reading with facility, and of accentuating the vowels, and even the diphthongs, as they are written, and not as they are absurdly pronounced by the modern Greeks. These degenerate descendants of a learned nation have insensibly introduced an alphabet with five *ιώτα*; so that the most harmonious language in the world becomes in their mouths a continual iotacism, like the neighing of a horse. I surmounted this difficulty by reciting in an audible voice not only the lessons which I daily studied, but even, for several hours, select portions from Herodotus, Thucydides, Xenophon, and the other orators of the second rank, all of whom I read twice through. I also read twice Procles, in the Timæus of Plato. I was impelled to peruse this last work for no other reason than because it was printed in characters difficult to be deciphered, and full of contractions.

This labor, instead of depressing my mind, as I

feared, contributed to rouse me from the lethargy into which I had fallen. In the course of this year, 1797, I augmented the number of my satires to seventeen: I also revised and corrected many of my poetical pieces. Becoming more enthusiastically attached to the Greek, as I more fully comprehended it, I translated the *Alcestis* of Euripides, the *Philoctetes* of Sophocles, and the *Persians* of Eschylus; and, in short, in order to try my powers, the *Frogs* of Aristophanes. While engaged in these occupations, I did not neglect the cultivation of the Latin tongue. I studied Lucretius, Plautus, and Terence, whose six comedies, by a strange combination of circumstances, I had translated piecemeal, without having read any of them to an end. Should my version of these comedies be considered above mediocrity, I may jocularly, and with truth, affirm that I executed my translation before reading the original.

I wished also to render myself acquainted with the different kinds of verse employed by Horace. I blushed at my ignorance of his writings, and at not having read and committed them to memory. I wished likewise to become acquainted with those which the Greeks employed in their choruses, and especially with those of Pindar and Anacreon. In short, throughout this year, I endeavored to accumulate as much information as possible. The only motive for engaging in these studies was to gratify my curiosity, and to abstract my mind from the anxiety and sorrow with which it was overwhelmed on account of the invasion of Italy by the French.

XXVI.

I NEITHER expected nor wished to derive any other advantage from my studies than that already mentioned ; but Apollo had still one in reserve, which I could not view with indifference. While I studied the literal translations in 1796, after reading Homer, Eschylus, Sophocles, and five tragedies of Euripides, I accidentally fell upon the *Alcestis* of this last author, a piece I had never heard mentioned. I was so much struck and affected by the sublimity of the subject, that, on finishing the perusal, I immediately scribbled down on a scrap of paper, which I still carefully preserve, the following note : “ Florence, 18th of January, 1796. Had I not mentally vowed to write no more tragedies, the reading of the *Alcestis* of Euripides would have determined me to change this resolution, and to compose an *Alcestis*. I should have availed myself of all the excellences in the Greek original, while I lopped off the absurdities with which it abounds. Thus I would have had fewer dramatis personæ than are found in the original.” I even superadded to this note the names of those whom I would have introduced, and afterwards thought no more of it. None of the other tragedies of this author ever affected me in a similar manner. While reperusing this poet some time afterwards, for it was my constant custom to read every work at least twice over, I felt, when I came to *Alcestis*, the same transports as before, and in the month of September, 1796, I sketched the scenes of this piece without any intention of finishing it. I had also translated from the Latin, in 1797, while unacquainted with the Greek, the first *Alcestis* ; in short, this second Al-

cestis, which had so often fallen in my way, heated my imagination to such a degree that in March, 1798, I could no longer set reins to it. I immediately therefore on returning home, after my usual morning excursion, sat down and composed, without a pause, the whole of the first act, inscribing on the margin, "Written under a paroxysm of enthusiasm, and while shedding a flood of tears."

During the following days I composed, under the influence of the same impassioned feelings, not only the four other acts, but even sketched the choruses, and wrote a preface in prose. The whole was finished by the 26th of May, when I felt myself relieved from an intolerable burden. I had, however, neither any intention of versifying nor of completing it.

In September, 1798, while persisting in the study of the Greek, I resolved to compare my translation of the Latin of the first *Alcestis* with the original, as much with a view of rectifying it as of improving myself in the language. Nothing tends so much to this purpose as translations, when we endeavor to comprehend not only the terms, but also the images and metaphors contained in the original. Having thrown aside the first *Alcestis*, I felt myself inspired for the fourth time with an enthusiastic fervor to complete my own. I again took it up, and while reading it shed a torrent of tears. I began to versify it on the 30th of September, 1798, and completed it with the choruses on the 21st of October, the same year. Thus I infringed my solemn vow, after preserving an uninterrupted silence for ten years. As, however, I neither wished to expose myself to the charge of plagiarism, nor of the sin of ingratitude, and as I conceived this tragedy belonged by right to Euripides, I placed it among my transla-

tions, where it remains under the title of *Alcestis II.*, by the side of *Alcestis I.*, which led me to conceive and execute the former. I mentioned not the infraction of my vow to any one, not even to my better half, hoping to derive some amusement from this silence. In the month of December I read this production, as a translation from Euripides, to a party of friends, whom I had purposely invited to my house. Those who did not thoroughly remember the original fell into the snare; but an individual, happening to be present who perfectly recollected it, discovered the joke towards the end of the third act; and the reading, which began in the name of Euripides, concluded in mine. This drama was well received, and even I myself, though I saw in it much to correct and retrench, was on the whole not displeased with it. I have related this fact at full length, because if *Alcestis* should ever be considered as a tragedy of any merit, it may serve to show the effects produced by enthusiasm on the imagination of a poet. Thus we see verified what often happens, that the most labored productions of a poet are generally inferior to those which are written from the mere impulse of the moment; hence the inspiration of the Muses ought never to be disregarded. If, after all, my *Alcestis* be regarded as a contemptible performance, the reader may justly smile both at it and my details, and regard them as the precursors of the fifth epoch, old age.

As soon as these two productions became known at Florence, my having studied the Greek no longer remained a secret. I carefully concealed it from every one, even from my friend Caluso, who discovered it in the following manner. I had transmitted to my sister, in May, this year, my portrait, excellently painted by Xavier Fabre of Montpellier. On the back of this

picture were two short verses from Pindar. My sister was delighted with my present, and, having turned it on every side, beheld the little scrawl above mentioned. She immediately sent for my friend Caluso, with whom she was intimate, in order to explain it. By this the Abbé saw that I had at least learned to form the characters, and felt fully assured that I would never have been guilty of such a ridiculous piece of pedantry as to write an epigraph which I did not comprehend. He directly wrote me a letter filled with reproaches for my dissimulation in concealing from him my study of the Greek tongue; to this I returned a short answer in that language, arranged as well as I was able, and better perhaps than might be expected from a scholar at fifty years of age. I transmitted with my epistle several specimens of my translations, in order that he might form a judgment of the progress I had made.

His praises on this occasion stimulated me to prosecute my studies with greater ardor. I resumed the same salutary exercise from which I had derived so much benefit in regard to the Latin and Italian, namely that of committing to memory many thousand verses from different authors.

XXVII.

The dangers with which Tuscany was threatened augmented every day. Already had the French, in November, 1798, taken possession of Lucca, and there was every reason to fear that on the commencement of the following year they would advance to Florence. On this account, therefore, I was solicitous to settle my affairs, and prepare myself for whatever might hap-

pen. Since the preceding year I had thrown aside the Anti-Gallican. With a view to save this production, in the fate of which my mind felt considerable interest, I caused ten copies of it to be transcribed, and deposited in different places, till circumstances should permit me to draw them forth. Having never dissembled my hatred against these founders of republics, I expected from them every species of outrage, and armed myself with fortitude to support it. While unmolested, I determined to remain silent, but if insulted and persecuted I resolved to conduct myself as a friend of rational liberty. I took in consequence such measures as that, if I could not live free and respected, I might at least not die unrevenged. One of the motives which induced me to become my own biographer was a dread lest some one might undertake the task who either had not sufficient opportunity to ascertain the facts, or who might pervert and distort them. A similar reason impelled me to compose my own epitaph, as well as that of my amiable friend. These two epitaphs proclaim nothing but the simple truth, devoid of all unmeaning amplification. Having thus, as far as possible, insured my own fame, and secured my memory against reproach, I immediately returned to my usual pursuits. I corrected and copied; I separated what was finished from that which remained imperfect, and abandoned everything which was neither suitable to my years nor consonant to the resolutions I had taken. In short, on attaining my fiftieth year, I resolved to take my final leave of the Muses. I collected into one volume seventy sonnets, thirty-nine epigrams, etc., which may be regarded as a continuation of those formerly printed at Kehl. I next composed a Pindaric ode, and in order to give it a somewhat Grecian appearance, I entitled it

τελευτωδία, after which I hung up my lyre. If I have since composed a few sonnets and epigrams, I have not preserved them, and should now find it impossible to recognize them as my own. Aware that if I did not voluntarily relinquish my studies, the time must at length arrive when I should be compelled to do so, I embraced the opportunity which my age, and the peculiar situation of my affairs afforded, to terminate my literary career.

With respect to my translations, I preserved that of the *Æneid*, which, though transcribed and corrected, during the two preceding years, was still far from being perfect. While I suppressed my translation of Terence, which I had never either revised or corrected, I preserved my version of Sallust, which, I conceived, was tolerably executed. Neither did I commit to the flames my four Greek translations; but as I was fully sensible they were very imperfect, I resolved, if time should be allowed me, to revise them carefully. I began by retranslating *Alcestris* from the original, in order to obviate any errors or mistakes into which I might have fallen, in rendering it from the Latin. I caused *Abel* to be transcribed, but without any alterations; as also a small piece in prose entitled "Advice to the Italian Powers," which I had written some years before. This work was not dictated by any wish or pride to appear on the theatre of politics, but merely by the indignation I felt at the narrow and unenlightened policy of the Emperor, and at the still more absurd conduct of the Italian states. Lastly, I finished my seventeen satires, the number of which I firmly resolved not to augment.

Having thus arranged my literary productions, I environed myself with a triple shield, and calmly

awaited every event that might occur. With the view of habituating myself to a kind of life, should my days be prolonged, more conformable to my years and future intentions, I adopted the following system, in which I shall certainly persevere, while health continues. Every Monday and Tuesday I devoted to the perusal of the Bible, the study of which I blushed to have delayed to such an advanced period of life. The Wednesday and Thursday I dedicated to Homer, whose works afford an inexhaustible source of information to any one who wishes to become an author; and the Friday, Saturday, and Sunday, to the study of Pindar, the most difficult to comprehend of all the Greek and Lyric poets, not even excepting either Job or the Prophets. After the first year, it was my intention to appropriate these three last days to the study of the Greek authors, whether in prose or verse. In pursuing this study, my views were not directed to acquire a fundamental knowledge of this language, which I regarded as unattainable, but merely to render myself equally familiar with it as with the Latin. As I found the method which I pursued to attain this end extremely useful, I shall give it in detail, in order that others may derive advantage from it. After perusing the Septuagint version of the Bible, according to the text of the Vatican, I compared it with the Alexandrine text, and lastly with the Italian translation of Diodati, which I found strictly conformable to the Hebrew. I also read the Latin Vulgate, and afterwards an interlineary Latin and Hebrew Bible. By dint of much study, for several years, I had rendered myself capable of understanding and reading the Hebrew language; the pronunciation of which is, in general, extremely disagreeable, as well as the phrases and modes of expression,

which exhibit a strange mixture of the sublime and barbarous.

I read Homer in the original Greek, pronouncing every word in an audible tone of voice, and rendered literally into Latin those verses which I wished to study in the morning. These frequently amounted to sixty, eighty, or even a hundred, and the blunders I committed in this exercise never interrupted my progress. After mangling these verses, I endeavored to accent them properly. I next read the Greek Scholiast, with the Latin notes by Barnes, Clarke, and others. Then again taking up the literal Latin translation, I compared it with the original Greek, particularly attending to those passages, the import of which I had mistaken in my first perusal, and inscribing on the margin of my text such elucidations as had not been given by the Scholiast. I wrote them in Greek, and to assist me in this, I had recourse to Hesychius, and various other authors. I noted down every uncommon word, expression, and phrase, and explained them likewise in Greek. Lastly, I perused the commentary of Eustathius, on these same verses, which had already cost me such immense labor. This method of study was doubtless extremely tedious and dull; but my comprehension was also somewhat dull, and therefore, more laborious study became necessary, in order to impress on my mind, at fifty, what it might have easily acquired at twenty.

During the preceding year I had performed a more laborious task than the present. I possess a small copy of Pindar, which contains not a single word over which I have not placed numerical figures from one to forty, with a view to point out the order in which the words should stand according to their concordance with

each other. Not satisfied with this, I took another Pindar, the old and faulty edition of Calliergi of Rome, which I treated in the same manner, and bestowed on it equal care as I had on Homer. I wrote also marginal notes in Greek, in which I endeavored to explain the intentions of the author, and to display his conceptions stripped of all metaphor. After Pindar I went through Sophocles and Eschylus in a similar manner. These labors, in which I persisted with the most consummate folly, contributed greatly to debilitate my memorial powers, and I am compelled to acknowledge that the progress I made was not correspondent to my efforts, and that I also committed innumerable mistakes during my first readings. Nevertheless, such studies had become so essential to my happiness, that since 1796 I uniformly continued to appropriate three hours every morning to similar pursuits. My *Alcestis*, my *saïres*, and various poetical pieces, etc. were all written during the subsequent hours, so that I only devoted the remaining part of the day to my own gratification, and when forced to relinquish my works or my studies, I never hesitated to abandon the former. After having thus arranged my mode of life, I retained only such of my books as I was in immediate want of, packing up all the rest. I sent them to the country, in order to prevent my being deprived of them a second time by an invasion of the French. This took place on the 25th of March, 1799, on which day, previous to their entering Florence, my friend and I left the city, having first taken care to remove all our property, abandoning our house to the occupation of the military.

XXVIII.

WHILE my friend and I with a few domestics resided in the country, our time was wholly devoted to letters. Besides understanding the English and German languages, she possessed a complete knowledge of the Italian and French, and was intimately acquainted with their national literature. Neither was she ignorant of everything essential relative to the state of learning among the ancients, having read the best translations extant in these four languages. Hence I could converse with her on every topic, and never felt myself more happy than when living with her alone, secluded from all other society. Very few of our friends dared to visit us, and that extremely seldom, lest it might awaken the suspicions of our politico-military despotism, which of all monsters is the most truly ridiculous, cruel, and insupportable. It is a tiger conducted by a hare.

As soon as I arrived in the country, I occupied myself with my first and second *Alecestis*. I was so much absorbed in this labor that I forgot the dangers that threatened us. These were not trifling; it was impossible to flatter ourselves that we should escape from them, as they became each day more apparent. Perturbed as my mind was, I yet assumed courage, and prosecuted my usual studies. Arrests the most arbitrary were extremely frequent, and always took place during the night. Some youths of the first families of the city had been taken as hostages. These had been dragged in the middle of the night from their homes, and from the arms of their relatives, and transported like slaves, to the Isles of St. Marguerite. Though a foreigner, I had

reason to fear I should be subjected to harsher and still more cruel treatment. As I expected that every night would be the last I should spend at my own house, I took every precaution to avoid being taken unawares, and to prevent myself being maltreated. Already had French liberty been proclaimed at Florence, and anarchy triumphed over worth and virtue. As for me I employed myself in versification, in studying and writing Greek, and in consoling my female friend. In this unfortunate state did things continue from the 25th of March to the 5th of July, when the French left Florence.

Accustomed to the tranquillity of the country, we resolved to spend another month in our retreat, before removing with our books and furniture to Florence. My return to the city, however, produced no change in the plan of my studies, which I pursued with greater ardor and enthusiasm than before.

After the battle of Nuovi I received a letter from the Marquis of C——, of Alexandria, who had espoused the daughter of my sister. I was not acquainted with him personally, but merely through report. He was a most meritorious officer, and had greatly distinguished himself in the service of his sovereign, the King of Sardinia, during the continuance of hostilities. He informed me that, having been dangerously wounded, and taken prisoner, he had entered into the French service after the expulsion of his Sardinian majesty in January, 1799.

I shall here incidentally recount what I had before forgotten to relate. Previous to the invasion of the French, I had been presented to the King of Sardinia at Florence. He had a double claim to my respect, because he had been my sovereign, and was unfortu-

nate. He received me very graciously, and I was much agitated on beholding him: I felt keenly on this occasion, what I had never before experienced, — the desire of serving him. I saw him abandoned, and perceived the foolish conduct of those who surrounded him. I would have offered him my services, had I been able to persuade myself that he could have derived any advantage from them; but it was now too late. He retired to Sardinia, but returned on affairs assuming a more favorable appearance, and remained for several months at Florence, while the Austrians protected Tuscany in the name of the Grand Duke. But uniformly ill-advised, he took no measures that could prove either beneficial to himself or Piedmont. Thus he was quickly overwhelmed. I had the honor of being again presented to him on his return from Sardinia, and as at this time he entertained some hopes that fortune would yet smile upon him, I suffered less regret from reflecting that I could be of no use to him.

XXIX.

WHILE I was closely occupied in correcting my four Greek translations, and buried in studies, undertaken perhaps at too late a period, the French again took possession of Tuscany, on the 15th of October. On this occasion time was not allowed me to retire to the country: besides, I had succeeded in obtaining, as a foreigner, from the municipality of Florence, an exemption from what I conceived the greatest of all misfortunes, having soldiers billeted in my house. As soon as my mind ceased to contemplate such an event, I resigned myself to circumstances. I shut myself up in my own house, and never went abroad, unless to take an

airing for two hours in the morning. This exercise, which my health rendered indispensable, I took in the most solitary places, and always without any attendants. But though I religiously shunned on all occasions the society of the French, they evinced not such a disposition towards me. Unfortunately the French general at Florence was attached to literature. Wishing to become acquainted with me, he called several times at my house. I determined, however, to be visible to no one; and instead of returning his politeness, I took not the least notice whatever of his calls. After an interval of a few days I received from him a verbal message, requesting to know when he might be permitted to wait on me. Finding that he persisted in his intentions, and unwilling to intrust a servant with a verbal message, which might not be faithfully communicated, I despatched the following note: "If the General in his official capacity commands his presence, Vittorio Alfieri, who never resists constituted authority of any kind, will immediately hasten to obey the order; but if, on the contrary, he requests an interview only as a private individual, Alfieri begs leave to observe, that, being of a very retired turn of mind, he wishes not to form any new acquaintance, and therefore entreats the French general to hold him excused."

To this the general immediately returned the following laconic reply: that, having read my works, he had been desirous of becoming acquainted with their author; but as that appeared not to be consonant to my wishes, he would no farther importune me on the subject. In fact, he left me to myself, and I was thus freed from an interview which must necessarily have proved no less embarrassing than painful to my feelings.

In the mean time Piedmont, having been revolution-

ized, and wishing to ape their masters in everything, transformed their Royal Academy of Sciences into a National Institute, modelled on the plan of that of Paris, in which the belles lettres were united to the fine arts. It pleased these gentlemen, whose designations I am unacquainted with, since my friend Caluso had been dismissed from his office of secretary to the academy, to nominate me one of its members. This circumstance was immediately notified in a letter addressed to me on the occasion. Having been previously informed by the Abbé of the honor they meant to confer on me, I returned the letter unopened, and caused them to be informed that I was little solicitous of matriculation, either in their society or any other; and, in short, that I would never enroll myself among any body of men who had excluded such characters as Cardinal Gerdil, Count Balbo, and Chevalier Morozzo, merely because they were sincere royalists.

Because I have never been a royalist, it by no means follows that I must belong to the class who style themselves democrats. Their republic is not conformable to my fancy; and I declare that I am, and shall ever be, hostile to all their opinions. The irritation I experienced on this occasion once more caused me to infringe my vow, and I composed fourteen verses, which I transmitted to my friend Caluso. I did not keep a copy of them, nor ever shall preserve those which resentment or any other passion may impel me to write.

I did not display equal resolution in the month of September, 1799, in resisting a newly awakened impulse, or, more properly speaking, an old one revived, which I experienced during several days, and to which I at length found myself forced to yield. Having always entertained the idea of trying my powers in the

composition of comedy, I sketched the plan of six all at once. These I determined to augment to twelve; but repeated disappointments, chagrin, and particularly my unremitting study of a language so extremely copious as the Greek, had so exhausted my powers of conception, that I believed it would thenceforward be utterly impossible to compose any work requiring much mental exertion: thus I abandoned the idea. I know not how my mind was led to enter on this species of composition, during the most sorrowful period of my life, when we had fallen into a state of the most abject slavery, from which it was impossible to escape; at a period too when both time and opportunity were denied me to execute what it was my wish to undertake. Suddenly a poetizing spirit animated my mind, and in one of my excursions I almost simultaneously conceived my four first comedies, which, in the groundwork, form only one, since they all tend to the same object by different means. On returning home, I sketched them, and on the following day I essayed my strength in others of a different kind. I conceived the plan of two others, the first of which had no relation to Italian manners, while the second was truly an Italian comedy of the present day. I wished to demonstrate by this piece that I was competent to delineate the manners of the present age. But since these change, it is necessary that he who wishes his comedies to be handed down to posterity, should confine himself to depict the follies of man in the aggregate, and not those of men of any particular country, or existing at any particular period; otherwise, the spirit of comedy and the fame of an author must evaporate with the characters and manners he has described. Hence, these six comedies may be divided into three

different kinds. The four first are adapted to every age and country ; the second is a production altogether fanciful and poetical ; while the sixth may be considered as a true Italian comedy of the present day.

XXX.

THE year 1800, which had appeared to my mind unusually tedious, at length passed away ; and early in 1801, through the multiplied faults of the allied powers, a peace was concluded, which still continues.

Before closing my long literary career, I wished to try my remaining powers in the development of my six comedies. I wrote them in the same order in which I had conceived them, in the same space of time, and without interruption : on each I spent six days at most. The consequence of such incessant mental exertion was a severe indisposition, which prevented me finishing the fifth. I was seized with an inflammatory affection of the head, to which was superadded the gout, which fixed itself in my lungs and caused me to spit blood. On this I found myself compelled to suspend my labor, and to attempt the removal of my malady. Though extremely violent, it was but of short duration. My convalescence was, however, tedious, and I remained long in a valetudinary state. It was only towards the end of September that I felt myself enabled to resume my fifth and sixth comedies. They were all, however, developed early in October. As soon as this was accomplished, I found my mind relieved from an insufferable burden.

As on the return of peace, which restored in some degree tranquillity to Italy, the French had abolished the use of paper money, as well at Rome as in Pied-

mont, we no longer suffered those pecuniary embarrassments to which we had been subjected during the last five years.

In consequence of this happy change in our circumstances, we purchased four horses, one of which was intended for my use. Since my abode in Paris, I had neither kept horses nor carriages of my own, but hired them occasionally. In the mean time experience and public misfortunes, as well as so many examples before my eyes of others subjected to a harder fate than mine, taught me moderation. Who would suppose that I, who was formerly scarcely contented with ten or fifteen horses, should now think even four too many?

Not only satiated and disgusted with everything, but extremely temperate in my mode of life, always dressing in black, and expending little money except in the purchasing of books, I considered myself extremely rich, and took a pride in contemplating that I should be one half poorer at the time of my death than I was on entering the world. These were the reasons which induced me to disregard the offers made to me by my nephew C—— through the medium of my sister. He wished to exert his interest at Paris, where he had fixed his residence, in order to obtain for me a restitution of my confiscated property.

Like the grasshopper, which chirps only in warm weather, I began the versification of my comedies in the summer of 1802, with an ardor and enthusiasm equal to what I felt when sketching and developing them. During this year I experienced the injurious effects of too intense application to study. I have already mentioned that I never encroached on the three hours in the morning, which I each day dedi-

cated to reading and study, but I employed the rest of the day, and even those periods which were assigned to exercise, on my literary compositions. After completing the versification of two of my comedies, I was again attacked with an inflammation of the head, and my whole body became covered with boils. These would not have excited much attention, if the largest of them, which was situated on the outer ankle of the left leg, had not been complicated with an erysipelalous affection, and accompanied with such violent pain as to confine me to my bed during fifteen days. On this account I was forced to suspend my comedies, and submit patiently to confinement.

XXXI.

IT is now time to terminate my garrulity, and to bring this autobiographical sketch to a conclusion. The maladies under which I suffered, during the two last summers, have admonished me to bring my literary labors to a close. I here, therefore, conclude my fourth epoch, fully convinced that, did I even possess the inclination to enter on any new works, I should find myself deficient in energy to execute them. If it please God to spare my life during my twelfth lustrum, I shall employ it in the correction of my works and translations. Should I survive that period, I shall rest from my labors, and only prosecute my studies; and if at any time I may cast a casual glance on any of my productions, however I may attempt to improve the style, I shall add nothing. The only labor in which I mean to engage, after passing my sixtieth year, is the translation of Cicero on old age. I shall dedicate this

work, which is so conformable to my years, to my female friend, with whom I have participated in all the pleasures and sorrows of life.

As the printing of my unedited works during my lifetime would be attended with much fatigue, and subject me to the trouble of revision, I shall only leave behind me a correct manuscript of those which in my opinion merit to be published. All the others I intend to destroy. In like manner, should I be unable to give the last polish to my memoirs, I shall commit them to the flames. Being now about to enter upon my fifth epoch, and second childhood, I shall, in order to amuse the reader, recount my last act of imbecility. Since the period when I terminated my comedies, I have regarded myself as an individual whose actions could not fail to prove interesting to posterity. Having uniformly persevered, notwithstanding every obstacle, in the study of the Greek tongue, as soon as I became capable of comprehending, and of reading with facility Pindar, the Grecian dramatists, and especially the divine Homer, and of translating them, either literally into Latin or into tolerable Italian, I piqued myself not a little on the difficulties I had surmounted in the interval between my forty-seventh and fifty-fourth year. As every kind of labor merits some recompense, I conceived it was meet I should obtain one, and that it ought to be appropriate, honorable, and even splendid. With this view I invented a collar, on which were engraven the names of twenty-three poets, as well ancient as modern. To the collar is appended a cameo of Homer, and on the exergue two Greek verses of my own composition, and which I afterwards rendered into Italian. I submitted both the original and the translation to the inspection of the Abbé Caluso; the Greek, in order that

he might inform me whether I had committed any solecism, or any error in prosody; the Italian, with a view to learn whether I had not sufficiently softened down what might be reckoned too bold and intrusive in the Greek. An author, it is well known, may speak of himself with greater latitude in the dead than in the living languages. As my friend approved these verses, I have transcribed them in order to their preservation.*

As it was my wish to render the collar of the order as superb as possible, I caused it to be formed of gold, and enriched with jewels and precious stones. I declared myself a member of this new order, of which I have at least the merit of being the inventor. Should impartial posterity decree that I am not worthy of being a member of this institution, it will not, however, withhold that honorary distinction from others who may be deemed better entitled to it. Farewell then, reader, till we meet again; if ever that should happen, I may then probably, like a garrulous old man, be even more given to babble than I have been towards the close of the fourth epoch, — manhood.

VITTORIO ALFIERI.

FLORENCE, May 14, 1803.

* *Αὐτὸν ποιήσας Ἀλφῆριος ἱππεὶ Ὀμήρου
Κοιρανικῆς τιμὴν ἤλφανε θειοτέραν.*

Forse inventava Alfieri un Ordine vero
Nel farsi ci stesso Cavalier di Omero.





LETTER

FROM THE ABBÉ CALUSO TO THE COUNTESS OF
ALBANY,

CONTAINING SOME PARTICULARS RESPECTING THE AUTHOR'S
DEATH.



ADAM, — Since you have intrusted to my care the autobiographical sketch of our highly esteemed friend, I shall take the liberty of communicating to you with as much brevity as possible my thoughts on the subject, and of evincing the high sense I entertain of the honor you have conferred on me. Few were better acquainted than myself with the mind and character of this singular man; and I never for a moment doubted that he would impartially execute the task he had undertaken, without becoming either tiresome or ridiculous: but he has even surpassed my expectations by his amiable candor and dignified simplicity. His style is easy and unaffected, and the portrait he has drawn of himself exhibits a striking likeness, and bears evident marks of being traced by the hand of a master. In it we behold this exalted man, such as he really was, equally ardent and singular in respect to his natural dispositions, as by those efforts which he made in order to attain whatever appeared to him dignified and praiseworthy. It

is easy to observe that whenever he suffered himself to be led into extremes, his errors originated from the most laudable feelings. I cannot give a better proof of this than the opinion he had formed of me; I owe it only to the most lively friendship; it could be dictated by nothing else.

To the other causes of sorrow for the sudden and premature death of our esteemed friend, must be joined the regret that, among all the works which he has left more or less imperfect, these memoirs have not received the last corrections which he would unquestionably have bestowed on them, had he reached that age at which he proposed either to polish or commit them to the flames. To this fate doubtless he would not have condemned them. What right then have we to treat them with such severity; how could we think of depriving ourselves of a picture exhibiting so correct a view of all his actions and eccentricities? I cannot, however, madam, but extol that anxious solicitude with which you watch over these memoirs, and your determination of withholding them from every one, excepting a few select friends, for the purpose of enabling them to favor the public with a more ample account of this illustrious man. This is a task I myself dare not undertake, and I feel the most lively regret on that account, but unfortunately the will and the power to execute are not always in accordance with each other.

To complete the biographical sketch which our worthy friend has left behind him, I think it only necessary to subjoin what I have extracted from the letter with which you honored me. No one, madam, could be better acquainted with every circumstance relative to the last moments of his life than yourself, who never

for a moment quitted him, and devoted so much of your attention towards him.

Count Alfieri, some time previous to his death, had relinquished all his literary pursuits, excepting his comedies, the completion of which solely engaged his attention; while at the same time his chief amusement consisted in musing on the design and motto for the collar of the order of Homer, in which he was anxious to enroll himself a member. In the month of April, however, he was attacked by a fit of the gout, which always tormented him on every change of season. This paroxysm was unusually severe, probably because it attacked him when worn out with incessant labor, and when he no longer possessed that salutary vigor of constitution which could alone repel it from the vital organs. From having found, during a course of several years, that the state of his digestive functions was not so good as formerly, he had been led to suppose that in order to calm, or at least moderate, the violence of the gout, it behooved him to diminish the quantum of his food, moderate as it was. What, moreover, served to confirm him in this opinion was, that he uniformly found his spirits on fasting more vivacious and better adapted for study.

In vain, madam, did your tender solicitude for his welfare suggest the danger of such a course, and admonish him to desist from so abstemious a regimen, on observing him become more emaciated every day. Notwithstanding these urgent solicitations, he still remained inflexible in his purpose; and, dreading lest death should occur to prevent the completion of his comedies, devoted his whole time to their correction.

Not contented with this toil, and stimulated by the desire of amassing knowledge, he persevered in pursu-

ing his usual morning studies. The efforts which he made were greater in proportion as his health declined and he became more feeble; disgusted with everything but study, which constituted his chief amusement in his exhausted state, he pursued his accustomed labors till the 3d of October with unremitting assiduity. On that day, having arisen with an appearance of better health and spirits than usual, he went out after his morning studies to take an airing in his phaeton. Scarcely, however, had he entered it, than he was seized with a cold shivering. Imagining he would shake it off by walking, he alighted, but was immediately attacked by an acute pain in his bowels, which prevented him from proceeding. The fever under which he labored, on returning home, was extremely violent during the day, and abated not till the evening. Though tormented by incessant reaching, he passed the night without much suffering, and on the following day left his apartment and went down to dinner, but had no appetite. He dozed much during the remainder of the day, but was extremely restless throughout the night. On the morning of the 5th he indicated a wish to take the air, but was prevented by the day proving rainy. In the course of the evening he took his chocolate according to custom, and apparently with much pleasure. On the night of the 6th the pains in his bowels returned, and sinapisms were applied by the orders of his physician to the soles of his feet. As soon, however, as they began to produce some effect, he tore them off, dreading lest the vesications resulting from their application might render him incapable of walking. During the following day Alfieri appeared to be somewhat better, and was unwilling to remain in bed. On the morning of

the 7th his physician in ordinary requested that another member of the faculty might be called in to his aid. This was accordingly complied with, and it was agreed, on consultation, that fomentations and vesicatories should be applied to the lower extremities. The patient, however, would not comply with this advice, being continually haunted by the fear of not being able to walk. He swallowed some opium, which mitigated his pains and gave him a tranquil night. The repose, however, thus obtained, was accompanied by some raving and alienation of mind. The recollection of past events, which had formerly made a lively impression on his mind, recurred to his imagination. He spoke of his studies and of his labors for thirty years; and what is very remarkable, he repeated in succession a great number of verses from Hesiod, whom he had never read but once. You were by his side, madam, and it was from himself that you learned this last circumstance. It does not, however, appear that the idea of death, with which he had long familiarized himself, occurred to his mind at this moment, or that he suspected his end was so near at hand. This we are induced to believe, because he said not a word to you on the subject, though you never quitted him, excepting at six o'clock in the morning, when contrary to the advice of his physicians he obstinately persisted in taking oil and magnesia. This remedy appears to have been productive of much mischief, since two hours had scarcely elapsed from his taking it till his life was in imminent danger, and on your returning to his apartment his respiration was become so laborious as to threaten instant suffocation. He arose, however, from his chair, and, approaching the bed, leaned on it; and a few moments afterwards his vision became obscure,

and he expired. During his illness he neglected neither the duties nor the consolations of religion, but as no one suspected that his malady would make such rapid strides, he was not much importuned on this topic; so that his confessor arrived not in time to give him absolution. We are fully assured, however, that the count was not unprepared for this awful event, since his mind was often occupied with the thoughts of death, and he frequently discoursed on the subject. Thus terminated the life of this illustrious man, on the morning of Saturday, the 8th of October, 1803, when he had completed the fifty-fifth year of his age.

He was interred near the altar of the Holy Spirit, in the Church of S. Croce, where repose the ashes of so many illustrious men. A simple tombstone has only been raised over his grave, till the mausoleum, which you, madam, intend to erect to his memory be finished, and placed near that of Michael Angelo. Canova is already employed on it; and the work of such an artist must necessarily exhibit a model of perfection.

I could here wish to scatter a few flowers over the grave of my departed friend; I could wish to point out the irreparable loss which we, in common with all Italy, have sustained by his death; but it is necessary to restrain my tears, and this would only make them flow more abundantly. Let us then rather endeavor to find consolation in the reflection that his memory will not perish, but be immortalized in the works he has left behind him. We must also seek consolation in the idea that, though he did not live to bestow the last polish on these memoirs, he has throughout drawn a just picture of himself.

No one who reads this life of Alfieri with impartial-

ity can err respecting the judgment they ought to form of his character. If his sarcastic severity, which gave offence to many, had only been manifest in the work in question, you would, I think, madam, have consulted his fame in withholding its perusal from every one but a few select friends: but as the sentiments which have created him so many enemies are published in several other of his works; as the lustre of his reputation was alone sufficient to excite envy against him; as, moreover, it is probable that these papers, however preserved, may fall into the hands of ill-designing men, I conceive it necessary to counteract the impression which they might otherwise produce.

Alfieri is entitled to transcendent praise, not only as a writer, but as a man. Simple and irreproachable manners, which few even possess in the middle ranks of life, are seldom looked for in the higher circles of society. Not satisfied, however, with possessing such virtues himself, he uniformly inculcated them in his writings; and among the sublime affections which animated his soul, he beheld nothing but country and civil liberty. A philosopher, who exercises no profession nor employment in a regal government, is infinitely more independent than even the monarch himself. For my part, I have never desired any other liberty than that enjoyed under a monarchial government, nor have I ever disdained to conduct myself like a faithful subject. Many have, however, with too much facility, adopted the opinion that the enjoyment of civil liberty is incompatible with a government in which everything is regulated by the will of one who styles himself the master of his subjects. Thus did Alfieri deceive himself; thus it was that his mind became imbued with those enthusiastic and patriotic sentiments which he

endeavored to diffuse throughout Italy. But though ardently desirous of beholding the revival of Italian liberty, he yet wished to separate himself from those abandoned men who, like him, had evinced themselves the warm partisans of liberty, and who by their crimes had even rendered its name odious. Philosophers will tell us that we ought not to confound the bad with the virtuous, and that nothing can justify his hatred towards a whole nation. But we must consider Alfieri like an impassioned lover, who finds it impossible to be just to the enemies of his mistress. We must, moreover, consider him as the Demosthenes of Italy, opposing his Philippics to the Macedonian phalanx. So far from wishing to be considered as his apologist on that account, I am of opinion that the reputation of this illustrious man requires not my feeble support. I merely request indulgence for a fault which had its origin in the best feelings of the heart, the love of his country. You are at perfect liberty, madam, to make what use of my letter you may think proper, and I entreat you to accept of my profound respect and veneration.

THOMAS VALPERGA-CALUSO.

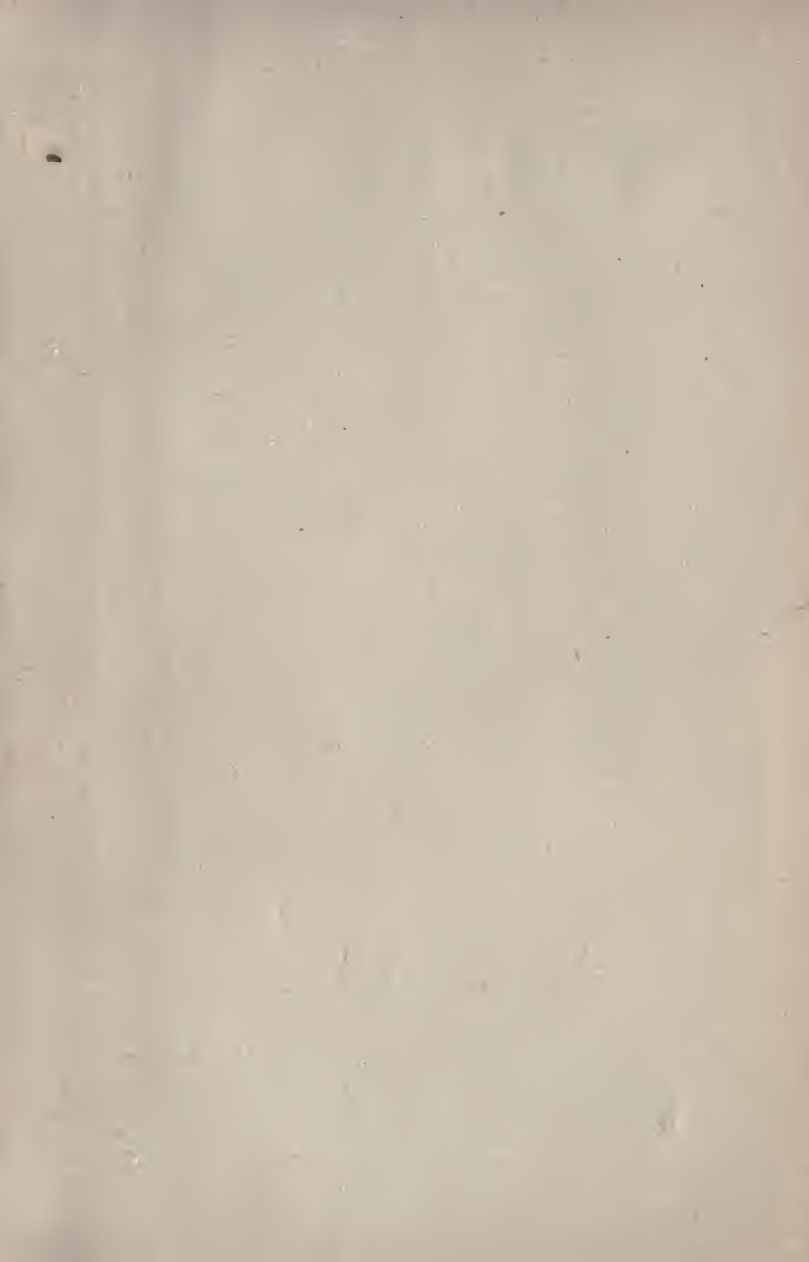
FLORENCE, July 21, 1804.

THE END.









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